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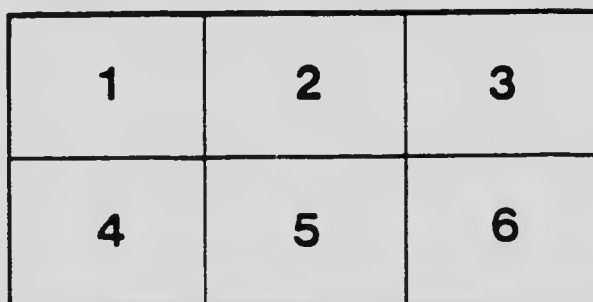
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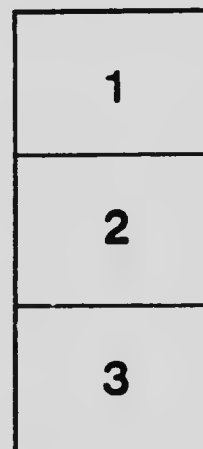
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SAMUEL T. COLERIDGE.

MORANG'S EDUCATIONAL SERIES

COLERIDGE
AND
WORDSWORTH
SELECT POEMS

*PRESCRIBED FOR THE MATRICULATION AND
DEPARTMENTAL EXAMINATIONS
FOR 1903.*

EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
BY PELHAM EDGAR, PH.D.

TORONTO
GEORGE N. MORANG & COMPANY, LIMITED
1902

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LIFE AND WRITINGS OF COLERIDGE

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, born at Ottery St. Mary, October 21, 1772; died at Highgate, July 25, 1834.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE was born at Ottery St. Mary, Devonshire, on the 21st of October, 1772.

Childhood and youth. His father, the Rev. John Coleridge, the vicar and schoolmaster of the place, had conquered his small position in the world by dint of hard and faithful work. He had been twice married, and the poet was the youngest of a family of thirteen children. The only characteristic trait which Coleridge can be said to have inherited from his father was a certain intellectual pedantry, which manifested itself in later years by the outlandish titles which he assigned to works not destined to advance in many instances beyond the title-page.* So we find in the worthy vicar's *Critical Latin Grammar* a proposed change in the nomenclature of the cases, whereby the ablative was to receive the expressive name of the *quippe-quare-quale-quia-quidditive case*. It is also told of him that he was wont to harangue his simple congregation in the original Hebrew, as being the "immediate language of the Holy Ghost." They considered his successor as wanting in piety for abandoning this practice.

* For example, "Consolations and Comforts from the exercise and right application of the Reason, the Imagination, and the Moral Feelings, addressed especially to those in Sickness, Adversity, or Distress of Mind, from Speculative Gloom, etc."

The poet's mother, Anne Bowdon, was a practical-minded woman, of no marked ability of any kind, but thoroughly determined that all her sons should receive the education of gentlemen. The father had frequently announced his intention of apprenticing them to various trades; so Mrs. Coleridge perhaps conferred upon the world a poet, and saved it from an incompetent blacksmith.

Our knowledge of Coleridge's childhood is derived entirely from his autobiographical letters to Thomas Poole, written in 1797.* That he was unlike other boys need scarcely be said. From his earliest years he was an omnivorous reader, and led captive by an imagination which seized upon and magnified whatever he read. "My father's sister kept an *everything* shop at Crediton, and there I read through all the gilt-cover little books that could be had at that time, and likewise all the uncovered tales of Tom Hickathrift, Jack the Giant-killer, etc. And I used to lie by the wall and *mope*, and my spirits used to come upon me suddenly; and in a flood of them I was accustomed to race up and down the church-yard and act over all I had been reading, on the docks, the nettles, and the rank grass," cutting them down, as he elsewhere says, "like one of the Seven Champions of Christendom." "So I became a *dreamer*, and acquired an indisposition to all bodily activity; and I was fretful and inordinately passionate, and as I could not play at anything and was slothful, I was despised and hated by the boys; and because I could read and spell, and had, I may truly say, a memory and under-

* Poems referring to his boyhood are the following: *Sonnet to the River Otter*; *Lines to a Beautiful Spring in a Village*; *Frost at Midnight*; *Lines Composed in a Concert Room*, and other stray verses.

standing forced into almost an unnatural ripeness, I was flattered and wondered at by all the old women. And so I became very vain, and despised most of the boys that were at all near my own age, and before I was eight years old I was a *character*. Sensibility, imagination, vanity, sloth, and feelings of deep and bitter contempt for all who traversed the orbit of my understanding, were even then prominent and manifest."

Coleridge's father died in 1781, and the following year Mr. Francis Buller obtained for the boy a presentation to Christ's Hospital, the famous London charity school.* Here, then, in September, 1782, Coleridge was installed, and the great grim school remained his home for nine years almost without a break. Although it is possible that he may have occasionally visited his home in the interval, there are no reliable records of this until 1791.†

His chief instructor was the famous Boyer, a disciplinarian of the old school. He used sometimes, the poet says, to lay on an extra stroke with the explanatory words, "You are such an ugly rascal." Despite these flogging propensities Coleridge seems not to have disliked him, and his teaching at least must have been thoroughly sound. His literary taste was perhaps too exclusively conservative, for in the school library which he established was to be found neither Spenser, Chatterton, nor Cowper, names soon to be revered by the young romantic school. However, among the Greek and

* Of descriptive interest are two essays of Charles Lamb: *Recollections of Christ's Hospital* and *Christ's Hospital Five-and-thirty Years Ago*.

† See Coleridge's poem *To the Rev. George Coleridge*, ll. 17 f., and cf. the "poor friendless boy" of Lamb's above-mentioned essay (the latter one).

Latin classics his discernment was admirable,* and Coleridge, as a testimony to the general soundness of his judgment, records the caustic humor with which he assailed violations of taste in the poetic exercises of the class. "Harp? Harp? Lyre? Pen and ink, boy, you mean! Muse, boy, muse? Your nurse's daughter you mean! Pierian spring? Oh aye! the cloister-pump, I suppose!"

At fifteen Coleridge, in a capricious fit, sought to become apprenticed to a cobbler, and even induced the latter to interview Boyer for the purpose. The result was unpleasant for the cobbler, and Coleridge remained at school. Shortly afterwards his brother Luke came up to walk the London Hospital, and this diverted the young Coleridge to a passionate zeal for medicine. This in turn "gave way to a rage for metaphysics. . . . After I had read Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary* I sported infidel; but my infidel vanity never touched my heart." Boyer saw fit to remove this folly by a flogging—"the only just one," Coleridge used to say, which he ever received from his master.

He still continued to be an inordinate reader, and, as he confessed, devoured the contents of a circulating library to which a strange chance gave him access. The story is characteristic enough to be true. He was walking in a crowded street, imitating with his arms the motion of swimming. His hand came in contact with an old gentleman's pocket, who turned round sharply to seize the thief. Coleridge timidly explained that he thought that he was Leander swimming across the Hellespont. The answer was apparently satisfactory, and Coleridge benefited, as we have said, by the gift of a subscription to the library.

*See *Biographia Literaria*, chap. i (Harper's edition, p. 147).

Infidel literature seems now to have been superseded by works of a mystical character, such as Taylor's translation of the Neoplatonic writer Plotinus. It is to this period in Coleridge's life that Lamb's often-quoted and high-flown description must apply: "Come back into my memory, like as thou wert in the dayspring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee—the dark pillar not yet turned—Samuel Taylor Coleridge, logician, metaphysician, bard! How have I seen the casual passer through the cloisters stand still, entranced with admiration . . . to hear thee unfold, in thy deep and sweet intonations, the mysteries of Jamblichus or Plotinus (for even in those years thou wast not pale at such philosophic draughts), or reciting Homer in his Greek, or Pindar, while the walls of the old Gray Friars re-echoed to the accents of the *inspired charity boy*."

Coleridge was roused from his metaphysical fit by two circumstances. At the age of sixteen he became boyishly interested in a certain Mary Evans. Shortly afterwards, in October, 1789, his friend Middleton sent to him a copy of Bowles's sonnets. The Mary Evans episode seems to have ripened by degrees into a warm attachment, and Coleridge's most competent biographer, the late James Dykes Campbell, attributes to his unsatisfied hopes the subsequent unhappiness of the poet's married life. The effect of Bowles's poetry upon him deserves our closer attention.

In the life of every child of genius there seems to come a moment of special revelation, when the future flashes upon his inward vision, and resolutions are formed which influence his whole career. At first sight it would appear a very ironical thing that the turning point in Coleridge's

Sonnets of
Bowles.

life should be marked by the chance encounter of Bowles's poetry. Cowper or Burns would have surely served the purpose better; but he was not familiar with their work until a later period, when his own theories of poetry were already firmly fixed. And what shall we say of Bowles's poems? To any one who now has the curiosity to read them they seem mediocre and insipid even. But we have been fed on stronger diet, and have had the privilege of reading Coleridge himself and the remarkable group of poets who surrounded him. In his *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge tells us (Chapter I) how repugnant to his taste and better judgment the poetry of the school of Pope had become; and Bowles, though sometimes erring upon the side of artificiality, possessed a native freshness and a genuine love for Nature which was foreign entirely to the narrower classical spirit, and seemed to the young Coleridge the promise of a new dawn in poetry. We know that other forces much more powerful were working for the liberation of the spirit of poetry,* yet Coleridge, with his limited access to contemporary works, thought that he had made a discovery of the first importance. He confesses to have written at least forty manuscript copies of the sonnets for distribution among his friends.

Coleridge's school days were drawing to a close. He had been elected a Grecian in 1788, which implied that his scholarship had already attracted attention. On the 12th of January, 1791, he was appointed an exhibitioner

* The important books of the eighteenth century, to bear in mind as influencing poetry in new directions, are the following: 1760-'65, Macpherson's *Ossian*; 1764-'70, Chatterton's *Poems* (greatly admired by Coleridge); 1765, Percy's *Reliques of English Poetry*; 1772-'78, Warton's *History of English Poetry*; 1775-'78, Tyrwhitt's *Chaucer*; 1785, Cowper's *Task*; 1786, Burns's *Poems*; 1798, *Lyrical Ballads*, by Coleridge and Wordsworth.

at Jesus College, Cambridge. His "discharge" from the school bears the date of September 7, 1791. In the following month he went into residence at Cambridge, 1791-1794. Jesus, became a pensioner on November 5, and matriculated on March 26, 1792. These are meagre facts to record, but they present nearly all that is known of Coleridge's university career. He received slight emoluments from his Christ's Hospital Exhibition, and from a Rustat scholarship gained after going up to the university. He was also very proud of winning in his first year a gold medal for a Sapphic ode upon the slave trade. In the following year he failed to gain any honors. In December, 1794, he left Cambridge without taking a degree.

Coleridge's life at Cambridge, apart from its academic side, was not without curious incidents. At the close of 1793, whether from debts or disappointed love, the poet fled from Cambridge, and, with the capriciousness of a true son of genius, enlisted under the name of Silias Tomkyn Comberbach in the Fifteenth, or King's Regiment of Light Dragoons. It was a sorry farce. No more unsoldierlike figure ever tumbled from a horse than Coleridge. His duties bewildered him; but by dint of nursing his sick comrades, writing letters for the more ignorant, and recounting to them amazing stories of Alexander and his conquest of the world, he managed, with their willing assistance offered in return, to keep himself and horse tolerably respectable. Wearying of his uncongenial employment, Coleridge seems to have revealed his whereabouts in a letter to a school friend, who in turn communicated the intelligence to his brothers. As a result of their efforts Coleridge was bought out and received his discharge in

Enlistment
in the
dragoons.

April, 1794. He returned a penitent to Cambridge, where he was publicly admonished by the Master in the presence of the Fellows. The story is evidently untrustworthy which ascribes Coleridge's discharge to the personal intervention of his captain. The latter, it is said, had chanced to observe the following inscription scrawled by Coleridge on the stable walls, *Eheu! quam infortunii miserrimum est fuisse felicem*. This led him to make inquiries as to the former condition of the trooper, with the above-mentioned result.

In June Coleridge decided to visit an old school friend at Oxford. It was here that Southey and Coleridge first came together, and it was here that the very boyish and very romantic scheme of pantisocracy was spontaneously hatched.

Meeting with
Southey,
June, 1794.

Much has been written of this curious episode in their lives. Briefly the plan was as follows, quoting in part from a letter of Thomas Poole: * "Twelve gentlemen of good education and liberal principles are to embark with twelve ladies in April next" for some "delightful part of the new back settlements" of America. The labor of each man for two or three hours a day was to suffice for the support of the colony. The produce was to be common property; there was to be a good library; and the frequent leisure hours were to be employed in study, discussion, and in the education of the children after a settled system. The women were to devote themselves to taking care of the infant children and other suitable occupations, not neglecting the cultivation of their minds. It was not yet determined "whether the marriage contract shall

Pantis-
ocracy.

*Thomas Poole and his Friends, I. 96-99.

be dissolved, if agreeable to one or both parties." Every one was "to enjoy his own religious and political opinions, provided they do not encroach on the rules previously made. . . . They calculate that every gentleman providing £125 will be sufficient to carry the scheme into execution."

The banks of the Susquehanna were selected as a suitable locality, partly because of the pretty name, and in part because of the security it afforded "from hostile Indians and bisons." They were assured that literary characters made money there, "and the mosquitoes are not so bad as our gnats." This sounds chimerical enough, as indeed it proved to be. Practical difficulties soon arose, not, however, in the matter of obtaining wives, for Coleridge and Southey had secured the amiable consent of two of the Misses Fricker, while Lovell, a fellow-pantisocrat, had disposed of the third. The trouble from the outset was a pecuniary one; and when about a year later Southey showed his native common sense by withdrawing from the movement, it abruptly fizzled out and died.

It certainly deserved to die; and if there is something pathetic in this overthrow of early hopes, there is something still more ironical in the reflection that as years went on Coleridge and Southey, the youthful hot-heads of revolt, should have settled into ruts of the most rigid conservatism. Let us remember, however, that at the period of which we write revolutionary ideas were in the very air men breathed. The conservative Wordsworth of middle life has told us eloquently enough in *The Prelude* how he too caught from France the universal contagion. Coleridge in after days saw the abundant folly of this visionary scheme, but in a passage from his

later writings* he attaches a peculiar value to it in relation to his intellectual development. "Strange fancies, and as vain as strange! Yet to the intense interest and impassioned zeal, which called forth and strained every faculty of my intellect for the organization and defense of this scheme, I owe much of whatever I at present possess, my clearest insight into the nature of individual man, and my most comprehensive views of his social relations, of the true uses of trade and commerce, and how far the wealth and relative power of nations promote or impede their welfare and inherent strength. Nor were they less serviceable in securing myself, and perhaps some others, from the pitfalls of sedition; and when we at length alighted on the firm ground of common sense from the gradually exhausted balloon of youthful enthusiasm, though the air-built castles which we had been pursuing had vanished with all their pageantry of shifting forms and glowing colors, we were yet free from the stains and impurities which might have remained upon us had we been travelling with a crowd of less imaginative malcontents, through the dark lanes and foul byroads of ordinary fanaticism."

The first literary fruit of this revolutionary ardor was the *Fall of Robespierre*, a rhetorical drama written conjointly by Southey and Coleridge, and published as Coleridge's at Cambridge in September, 1794. During the summer, as has been said, he became engaged to Miss Sarah Fricker, not a little to Southey's astonishment, "because he had talked of being deeply in love with a certain Mary Evans." He returned to Cambridge after the summer vacation, but left somewhat precipitately in the middle of December, 1794, without taking a degree.

Lectures
Cambridge,
December,
1794.

* *The Friend*, Section I, Essay VI.

He did not, however, go to his *fiancée* or to Southey in Bristol, but to London, where he and his old school-fellow, Lamb, held royal cheer and converse at the sign of the "Cat and Salutation." "Coleridge did not come back to Bristol," wrote Southey to the publisher Cottle, "till January, 1795, *nor would he, I believe, have come back at all*, if I had not gone to London to look for him. For, having got there from Cambridge at the beginning of winter, there he remained without writing to Miss Fricker or me."

The runaway, to the misfortune of himself and his future wife, was restored by the ever-watchful Southey, and with Burnett, the pantisocrat, they established themselves in lodgings at Bristol. Coleridge endeavored ineffectually to raise his share of the proposed expenses by a series of public lectures. He was not even able to pay his lodging bill, and the friendly Cottle, printer, bookseller, and poetaster, came to the rescue with a welcome five-pound note. By this time Southey had abandoned pantisocracy, thus incurring the stern displeasure of Coleridge, who was still ostensibly faithful to the plan. However, when Cottle offered him a guinea and a half per hundred lines for his poetry, he seems to have found it unnecessary to retire to the backwoods for sustenance. In anticipation of marriage he had in August secured a cottage in Clevedon, in Somersetshire (it is still standing), and on October 4, 1795, Coleridge and Sarah Fricker were married at the church of St. Mary Redcliffe, in Bristol, famous even then for its association with Chatterton's career.

Marriage,
Oct. 4, 1795.

The honeymoon began auspiciously enough at Clevedon. He was certainly happy in his domestic life, if

we accept the testimony of *The Æolian Harp*, a sincere and beautiful poem written in the Clevedon cottage.* His literary prospects were exceptionally bright, and his ambition and intellectual powers alike seemed to point forward to a brilliant and unclouded career. With a laudable desire to increase his means, he determined to establish a weekly journal to be called *The Watchman*. With the object of soliciting subscriptions, Coleridge set out upon a journey through the north country, "preaching by the way in most of the great towns as an hireless volunteer, in a blue coat and white waistcoat, that not a rag of the woman of Babylon might be seen on me."† The first number announced for February 5, appeared on March 1. It was pronounced dull, and the succeeding numbers gave increasing offense to the subscribers. On May 13, publication was suspended, and but for a timely subscription, which the poet's friend Poole organized, he would have been in desperate straits.

Nothing seems to have prospered with him at this time. He was unsuccessful in a prospective editorship of the *Morning Chronicle*, and equally unfortunate, or so he thought, in failing to secure a lucrative tutorship of the sons of a wealthy Mrs. Evans.‡ However, a young man, Charles Lloyd, had come under the spell of Coleridge's conversation, and had gained the privilege for eighty pounds a year of living under the poet's roof on Redcliffe Hill, his new home near Bristol. With this sum and his meagre literary earnings life was possible.

* Compare also *Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement*.

† For Coleridge's account of this tour see *Biographia Literaria*, chap. x.

‡ Unconnected with the before-mentioned Mary Evans.

On the 19th of September, 1796, the first child was born, the brilliant David Hartley Coleridge. This seems

David
Hartley
Coleridge,
born Sept.
19, 1796.

to have brought a temporary return of happiness, but a morbid depression, evidently constitutional, soon settled again upon the poet. He was eager to secure a house near

his friend Poole, and the worry and anxiety consequent upon his failure brought on a severe neuralgia. The

neuralgia drove him to laudanum, and from
Laudanum. the clutches of this drug he never wholly

shook himself free. "I took between sixty and seventy drops of laudanum," he wrote to Poole, "and *sopped* the Cerberus just as his mouth began to open. . . . I have a blister under my right ear, and I take twenty-five drops of laudanum every five hours, the ease and spirits gained by which has enabled me to write you this flighty but not exaggerated account." A letter published in the *Academy* (February 24, 1894) shows that the vice had insinuated itself still earlier than this. It is dated 12 March, 1796: "Since I last wrote you I have been tottering on the verge of madness, my mind overbalanced on the *e contra* side of happiness, the blunders of my associate (in the *Watchman*), etc. . . . Such has been my situation for the last fortnight. *I have been obliged to take laudanum almost every night.*"

The consequences of this fatal habit upon his intellectual and moral welfare, and upon his personal happiness, can not be over-estimated. At a later part of this short narrative it will be not inappropriate to insert his own description of himself when the vice had possessed him body and soul. Meanwhile, with brief and "blessed intervals," as Coleridge fondly called them, the word laudanum will be found writ large on every page and

chapter of his life. For a few short years he was still to enjoy the almost unimpaired control of his faculties, and his period of ripest poetic activity follows close upon this first indulgence in the drug. But the downfall was swift to follow; and nothing in literary history is sadder than the sight of this noble nature struggling in the toils, and nothing more admirable than the moral recovery of his final years.

Coleridge's desire to be near his friend Poole was at length satisfied, and on the last day of the year the little family arrived at Nether Stowey in Somersetshire. The poet Wordsworth was their near neighbor,* and here was formed that famous friendship, as significant in many ways for English literature as was for German literature the intercourse of Goethe and of Schiller.

Nether Stowey period,
Dec. 31, 1796,
to September,
1798.

Coleridge hoped to draw his chief sustenance from his vegetable garden, but literature flourished more vigorously than cabbages. The productiveness of both Coleridge and Wordsworth received a stimulus from their intercourse.

Coleridge
and Wordsworth.

In the intervals of Unitarian preaching Coleridge occupied himself until October with a tragedy, undertaken

at the request of Sheridan. In its first form as *Osorio* this was rejected by the Drury Lane committee. Long afterwards, in 1812, at the instance

Osorio, 1797.

of Lord Byron, Coleridge recast the play, and under the altered title of *Remorse* it was produced at

Remorse, a
tragedy

Drury Lane in 1813 with striking success. He received from that source £400, twice as much, he averred, as he had gained "by all his literary labors put together."

* Alfoxden was only three miles distant.

In June the second edition of his poems appeared, and in November of the same year occurred the memorable expedition with Wordsworth among the Quantock Hills. Here the scheme of the *Ancient Mariner* was discussed, with the original intention of making it a joint production. Wordsworth, however, found the subject too weird and supernatural, and abandoned it entirely to his friend. Coleridge worked eagerly upon the ballad until, on the 23rd of March, 1798, it was completed. Meanwhile he had commenced the marvelous fragment *Christabel*, and many celebrated poems besides were written in that productive year between the summer of 1797 and the summer of 1798.*

This was the most happy of those "blessed intervals." Throughout these months he was an occasional contributor to the *Morning Post*, and a frequent preacher in neighboring Unitarian chapels. In January, 1798, he was a candidate for the Unitarian pulpit in Shrewsbury. But now a most fortunate thing for Coleridge's material prospects occurred. Thomas and Josiah Wedgwood, sons of the famous potter, had been attracted by Coleridge's intellectual powers, and desiring to preserve them entirely for literature, they generously offered him an annuity of £150 for life. No conditions were attached to this save that he should abandon his intentions to preach, and devote himself entirely to the study of poetry and philosophy.†

The
Wedgwood
annuity.

* *To the Rev. George Coleridge*, May 26, 1797; *This Lime-tree Bower my Prison*, June, 1797, to commemorate a visit of Charles Lamb; *Ode to France*, February, 1798, first published in the *Morning Post* as *The Recantation*, April, 1798; *Frost at Midnight*, February, 1798; *Fears in Solitude*, April, 1798; *Kubla Khan*, April (?), 1798 (composed in a narcotic sleep); *The Nightingale*, April, 1798.

† For some reason, never satisfactorily explained, Josiah

Possessed of this new source of income, a spirit of restlessness came over Coleridge. His friendship with Lloyd had come to an end, and with it the latter's residence beneath his roof. With his oldest friend, Lamb, he had also quarrelled, and, most cogent reason of all, the Wordsworths had decided to abandon Stowey. These were some of the considerations that induced him to go abroad. His choice of Germany as a place of abode was doubtless determined by the desire to become familiar with German philosophy, then at its most brilliant epoch. His own mind was in a state of flux, and he desired a solidification of his ideas upon religious, political, and philosophical questions. Accordingly, in company with the Wordsworths, he set sail from Yarmouth on the 16th of September, 1798, the month in which the *Lyrical Ballads* appeared. He soon separated from his friends and proceeded alone to Ratzeburg. Thence he passed to Göttingen, where he matriculated in February, 1799. His life in Germany seems from his own account to have been full of work. But poetry held a small place in the midst of philosophical labors, and was destined from this time to sink into ever greater insignificance. After his return to England, in June, 1799, he had still enough of the "divine afflatus" to compose the second part of *Christabel*, and a few years later, in 1802, at a period of the deepest physical and mental distress, he roused himself sufficiently from his lethargy to write the poignant *Ode to Dejection*, the swan song of his buried hopes. With this poem his career as poet may be considered closed. Yet occasionally the weak flame revived, as in the

The German
visit,
September,
1798, to
June, 1799.

Wedgwood, in 1811, withdrew his half of the annuity. He was probably annoyed by Coleridge's degenerate habits.

self-chastising lines to Wordsworth (*To a Gentleman*), written after hearing the latter recite to him his great poem *The Prelude*.

"Ah! as I listened with a heart forlorn,
The pulses of my being beat anew:
And even as life returns upon the drowned,
Life's joy rekindling roused a throng of pains—
Keen pangs of Love, awakening as a babe
Turbulent, with an outcry in the heart;
And fears self-willed, that shunned the eye of hope;
And hope that scarce would know itself from fear;
Sense of past youth, and manhood come in vain,
And genius given, and knowledge won in vain;
And all which I had culled in wood-walks wild,
And all which patient toil had reared, and all,
Commune with *thee* had opened out—but flowers
Strewed on my corse, and borne upon my bier,
In the same coffin, for the self-same grave!"

This poem, written in 1807, reflects the sombre and hopeless despair in which Coleridge was plunged. Opium and metaphysics had done their work.

The narrative of Coleridge's life after his return from Germany may be somewhat briefly summarized. He returned for a short visit to Stowey, but his regular life there was never resumed. While making a tour of the lake country with Wordsworth he received a proposal from a journalist named Stuart to write political articles for the *Morning Post*. To this request Coleridge acceded, and on November 27th he arrived in London, where he was presently joined by his wife and children.

Journalism
in London.
December.
1799.

The late Mr. Traill, in his *Life of Coleridge*, considers the brief journalistic period which ensued to have been exceptionally brilliant. Coleridge, though erroneously asserting that he had "raised the sale of the *Morning Post* from an inconsiderable number

to seven thousand a day in the course of one year," still felt that the task was unworthy of his powers. "On Stuart's papers I wasted the prime and manhood of my intellect—adding thereby nothing to my fortune or reputation." Suffice it to say, that the work was uncongenial and was soon abandoned.

It has always been said that Coleridge was incapable of performing a compulsory task, but the laborious translation of Schiller's *Wallenstein*, which falls within this period is a brilliant exception to the rule. It was egregious hack work, and Coleridge never viewed it under any other light. In November, 1800, he writes to a friend excusing himself for not finishing *Christabel*, because of "the deep unutterable disgust which I have suffered in the translation of the accursed *Wallenstein*, which seemed to have struck me with barrenness." This "irksome, soul-wearying labor" is considered the finest poetical translation in the English language.

In June, Coleridge and his family visited the Wordsworths at Dove Cottage, their new home in the north of England, and in July of the same year (1800) he settled down in Greta Hall, Keswick.

Schemes innumerable haunted his brain, but he was powerless to execute them. In the autumn of 1800 falls the second part of *Christabel*, and then comes silence until the painful *Ode to Dejection* in April, 1802. The interval had been the blackest time of his life, the fatal turning point Mr. Dykes Campbell has rightly called it. He was broken in health, estranged from his wife and home, and hopelessly in the toils of laudanum. Until 1802 he lived almost constantly with the Wordsworths. Then he wandered helplessly about from place to place, hopeless, irresolute, and miserable. He tried to solve

the problem by change of scene and climate. On the 9th of April, 1804, he set sail for Malta. He had received a loan of £100 from Wordsworth, and a gift of the same amount from Sir George Beaumont. His annuity he left behind for his wife. In July he became the guest and quasi-private secretary of the governor of Malta, Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander Ball. From August to November he spent in Sicily. In January, 1805, he was appointed acting public secretary at Malta. In September of the same year he sailed for Naples, leaving that place in January, 1806, for Rome. Beyond meeting a few famous men nothing of importance resulted from this visit. He left hastily on the intimation that Napoleon had ordered his arrest because of certain articles which had formerly appeared in the *Morning Post*.

In August he returned to England "ill, penniless, and worse than homeless." Alienation from his wife had become confirmed, but his friends still remained faithful, and new ones arose to give him a helping hand. In fact, he was now living almost entirely on other people's charity. De Quincey, a perfect stranger to the poet, came to the rescue with a generous gift of £300.

In 1808 Coleridge roused himself sufficiently to announce a course of lectures at the Royal Institution on the *Principles of Poetry*. He was generally late in putting in an appearance. Sometimes he never appeared at all. The lectures were certainly a painful disappointment to his friends, although De Quincey probably exaggerated the unhappy situation in describing his frequent ineffectual efforts to speak with his black and swollen tongue cleaving to the roof of his mouth.

In September, 1808, we find Coleridge living with the Wordsworths at Grasmere. In December he wrote

to Davy: "My health and spirits are improved beyond my boldest hopes. A very painful effort of moral courage has been remunerated by tranquility—by ease from the sting of self-disapprobation. I have done more for the last ten weeks than I have done for three years before . . . I would willingly inform you of my chance of success in obtaining a sufficient number of subscribers, so as to justify me prudentially in commencing the work, but I do not possess grounds even for a sane conjecture. It will depend in a great measure on the zeal of my friends."

The reference here is to a proposed literary periodical to be named *The Friend*. Coleridge was inordinately hopeful of success, but Wordsworth voiced the general opinion of his friends in a letter to Poole: "I give it to you as my deliberate opinion, founded upon proofs which have been strengthening for years, that he neither will nor can execute anything of important benefit to himself, his family, or mankind." Everything "is frustrated by a derangement in his intellectual and moral constitution. In fact he has no voluntary power of mind whatever, nor is he capable of acting under any *constraint* of duty or moral obligation. . . . *The Friend* may appear . . . but it can not go on for any length of time. I am sure it can not."

Wordsworth was right. The arrangements for printing and distribution were eminently unpractical. Numbers were sometimes as much as seven weeks late, and when they appeared they were dull. The unhappy publication dragged itself on spasmodically until it ended with No. XXVII. on March 15, 1810. *The Friend*, as we now possess it, is rather a new work than a revision, and was composed at Highgate in 1818.

The Friend,
June, 1809,
to March,
1810.

In October, 1810, after spending a few months at his own home, Greta Hall, Coleridge journeyed to London with Basil Montagu. He was to have been his guest for an indefinite period, but the visit was abruptly and painfully concluded.

Montagu was foolish enough to tell Coleridge that Wordsworth had requested him to say that certain of his habits had made him an intolerable guest at Allan Bank (Wordsworth's home), and that there seemed absolutely "no hope for him." The painful impression that these distorted remarks made upon Coleridge was never removed. In later years his intercourse with Wordsworth was resumed, but the old confiding relationship was never again established.*

In November, 1810, Coleridge became the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Morgan at Hammersmith, and with them in their various homes he remained with brief intermissions until 1816, when he took up his permanent abode with the Gillmans. The intervening years were uneventful from a literary point of view. While staying with the Morgans he again assumed the rôle of journalist, in a very subordinate capacity as a sub-editor of the *Courier*. His chief resource, however, was lecturing, and many courses were delivered by him with frequent success until his last appearance in this capacity in 1819.

His revised tragedy, *Remorse*, was produced in January, 1813, with distinguished success.† Shortly

* Compare the original form of the *Ode to Dejection* with its final altered form.

† See page 14.

afterwards there is a new misunderstanding with Wordsworth. The result was disastrous for Coleridge's peace of mind, and the months between March and October are a blank in his life. His whereabouts even was a mystery to his friends.

Remorse.
January.
1813.

The years between 1813 and 1816 were spent chiefly with the Morgans at Bristol and at Calne in the county of Wilts. He planned much but executed little. His opium disease had reached a most critical stage, to judge by the tone of his letters at this period. He had formerly tried to conceal his vice. Now this was no longer possible. To Cottle he wrote in April, 1814: "For ten years the anguish of my spirit has been indescribable, the sense of my danger staring, but the consciousness of my GUILT worse, far worse, than all. I have prayed with drops of agony on my brow, trembling not only before the justice of my Maker, but even before the mercy of my Redeemer. 'I gave thee so many talents, what hast thou done with them?' Secondly, overwhelmed as I am with a sense of my direful infirmity, I have never attempted to disguise or conceal the cause.* On the contrary, not only to friends have I stated the whole case with tears and the very bitterness of shame, but in two instances I have warned young men, mere acquaintances, who had spoken of having taken laudanum, of the direful consequences, by an awful exposition of the tremendous effects upon myself.

"Thirdly, though before God I can not lift up my eyelids, and only do not despair of his mercy because to despair would be adding crime to crime, yet to my fellow men I may say that I was seduced into the ACCURSED habit ignorantly. I had been almost bedridden for

* Biographers doubt the truth of this.

many months with swellings in my knees. In a medical journal I unhappily met with an account of a cure performed in a similar case—by rubbing in of laudanum, at the same time taking a given dose internally. It acted like a charm, like a miracle ! I recovered the use of my limbs, of my appetite, of my spirits, and this continued for near a fortnight. At length the unusual stimulus subsided, the complaint returned, the supposed remedy was resorted to—but I can not go through the dreary history.

“ . . . Had I but a few hundred pounds, but £200, half to send to Mrs. Coleridge, and half to place myself in a private madhouse, where I could procure nothing but what a physician thought proper, and where a medical attendant might be constantly with me for two or three months (in less than that time life or death would be determined), then there might be hope. Now there is none ! O God ! how willingly would I place myself under Dr. Fox, in his establishment ; for my case is a species of madness, only that it is a derangement, an utter impotence of the volition, and not of the intellectual faculties ! ”

So his life dragged on. In 1815 he put together the *Biographia Literaria*, with its famous criticism of Wordsworth. In 1816 the *Christabel* volume appeared (the poem had been known and admired for many years in MS.); and in the same year Coleridge placed himself under the medical care of Mr. Gillman, a surgeon residing at Highgate.

Here the long twilight of his life was passed. He is no longer a poet save on rare occasions. Metaphysical speculation had won the day, and henceforth
 Highgate, 1816-1834. his influence was to be in a philosophical direction. More than any other man of his time he

affected the course of religious opinion in England, and from him as an ultimate source emanate alike the Broad Church and the Tractarian movements. His most important contributions to the literature of theology are: *Second Lay Sermon* (1817); *Aids to Reflection* (1825); *On the Constitution of Church and State* (1830).

Almost more important than his written work was the influence of his conversation, more especially upon the group of young men who gathered around him in his Highgate garret from about 1825 onward to the close. Carlyle was a transient visitor only, and though his recorded impressions savor of irreverence, for graphic expressiveness they are unrivalled. The word-portrait they give us, too, of Coleridge as he appeared in his declining years is exceedingly vivid, as we should expect. "The good man, he was now getting old, toward sixty perhaps, and gave you the idea of a life that had been full of sufferings; a life heavy-laden, half-vanquished, still swimming painfully in seas of manifold physical and other bewilderment. Brow and head were round and of massive weight, but the face was flabby and irresolute. The deep eyes, of a light hazel, were as full of sorrow as of inspiration; confused pain looked mildly from them, as in a kind of mild astonishment. The whole figure and air, good and amiable otherwise, might be called flabby and irresolute, expressive of weakness under possibility of strength. He hung loosely on his limbs, with knees bent, and stooping attitude; in walking, he rather shuffled than decisively stepped; and a lady once remarked he never could fix which side of the garden walk would suit him best, but continually shifted in corkscrew fashion, and kept trying both. A heavy-laden, high-aspiring, and surely much-suffering man. His voice, naturally soft and good, had contracted

itself into a painful snuffle and singsong — spoke as if preaching—you might have said preaching earnestly and also hopelessly the weightiest things.* . . . Nothing could be more copious than his talk; and further—
His conversation.—more it was always, virtually or literally, of the nature of a monologue, suffering no interruption, however reverent; hastily putting aside all foreign additions, annotations, or most ingenuous desires for elucidation, as well-meant superfluities which would never do. Besides, it was talk not flowing anywhither like a river, but spreading everywhere in inextricable currents and regurgitations, like a lake or sea, terribly deficient in definite goal or aim, nay, often in logical intelligibility; *what* you were to believe or do, on any earthly or heavenly thing, obstinately refusing to appear from it. So that, most times, you felt logically lost, swamped near to drowning in this tide of ingenious vocables, spreading out boundless as if to submerge the world."—*Life of John Sterling*, Part I., chap. viii.

In this strain, or more uncharitably, the description continues at great length. Carlyle was never a sympathetic listener, "a passive bucket to be pumped into," as he phrased it. But more docile and admiring disciples were willing to testify to Coleridge's amazing powers of conversation.† Already in his younger years this power had made him famous. De Quincey's record of his first impressions is not alone picturesque, but emphasizes also the fact that Coleridge's discursiveness,

* For further descriptions of Coleridge's appearance, see page 27 (his own description), and also Dykes Campbell's Introduction to the poems, page xxxiv (Miss Wordsworth's description).

† See H. N. Coleridge, *Fraser's Magazine*, 1835, and Preface to *Table Talk*, Lockhart, *Quarterly Review*, lii. Keats's *Letters*, No. XCII (Colvin).

which had wearied and perplexed Carlyle, was in truth subjected to the severest logical sequence. "I was too anxious to see him under all aspects to think of declining this invitation. That point being settled, Coleridge, like some great river, the Orellana or the St. Lawrence, that, having been checked and fretted by rocks or thwarting islands, suddenly recovers its volume of waters and its mighty music, swept at once, as if returning to his natural business, into a continual strain of eloquent dissertation, certainly the most novel, the most finely illustrated, and traversing the most spacious fields of thought, by transitions the most just and logical that it was possible to conceive. . . . Coleridge, to many people, and often I have heard the complaint, seemed to wander; and he seemed then to wander the most when, in fact, his resistance to the wandering instinct was greatest—viz., when the compass and huge circuit, by which his illustrations moved, travelled farthest into remote regions before they began to revolve. Long before this coming round commenced most people had lost him, and naturally enough supposed that he had lost himself. They continued to admire the separate beauty of the thoughts, but did not see their relation to the dominant theme. . . . However, I can assert, upon my long and intimate knowledge of Coleridge's mind, that logic the most severe was as inalienable from his modes of thinking as grammar from his language."—De Quincey, *Recollections of the Lake Poets*.

There is nothing further of importance to record of Coleridge's declining years. In 1824 he was elected an associate of the new Royal Society of Literature with an annuity of one hundred guineas. This lapsing with the death of George IV in 1830, it was made up for him by his friends. In 1828 he passed several weeks on the

Rhine with Wordsworth and his daughter. He revised in 1829 the final edition of his poems issued during his lifetime. In 1833, in anticipation of the end, he appointed a young friend and disciple, J. H. Green, as his literary executor, committing to his charge his philosophical fragments. Some years later Green embodied his master's teachings in a now forgotten *Spiritual Philosophy*. On July 25, 1834, Coleridge died.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE, TEMPERAMENT, ETC.

Coleridge thus describes himself in a letter to John Thelwall :

"As to me, my face, unless when animated by immediate eloquence, expresses great sloth and great, indeed almost idiotic, good nature. 'Tis a mere carcass of a face—fat, flabby, and expressive chiefly of inexpression. Yet I am told that my eyes, eyebrows, and forehead are physiognomically good ; but of this the deponent knoweth not. As to my shape, 'tis a good shape enough if measured, but my gait is awkward, and the walk of the whole man indicates *indolence capable of energies*.* I am, and ever have been, a great reader, and have read almost everything—a library cormorant. I am *deep* in all out of the way books, whether of the monkish times or of the puritanical era. I have read and digested most of the historical writers, but I do not *like* history. Metaphysics and poetry and 'facts of mind'—that is, accounts of all the strange phantasms that ever possessed 'your philosophy', dreamers, from Thoth the Egyptian to Taylor the English pagan, are my darling studies.†

* The italics are Coleridge's.

† A fantastic theme like the *Ancient Mariner* would therefore have a strong natural appeal for Coleridge.

In short, I seldom read except to amuse myself, and I am almost always reading. Of useful knowledge, I am a so-so chemist, and I love chemistry.* All else is *blank*, but I *will* be (please God) an horticulturist and a farmer. I compose very little, and I absolutely hate composition, and such is my dislike that even a sense of duty is sometimes too weak to overpower it. I can not breathe through my nose, so my mouth, with sensual thick lips, is almost always open. In conversation I am impassioned."—*Letter to John Thelwall*, November, 1796.

Miss Wordsworth's contemporary description tallies very well with the above: "He is a wonderful man. His conversation teems with soul, mind, and spirit. Then he is so benevolent, so good tempered and cheerful, and, like William, interests himself so much about every trifle. At first I thought him very plain—that is, for about three minutes. He is pale, thin,† has a wide mouth, thick lips, and not very good teeth, longish, loose-growing, half-curling, rough black hair. But if you hear him speak for five minutes, you think no more of them. His eye is large and full, and not very dark, but gray, such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dullest expression; but it speaks every emotion of his animated mind; it has more of 'the poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling' than I ever witnessed. He has fine, dark eyebrows and an overhanging forehead."—*Memoirs of Wordsworth*, I. 99.

Add to these descriptions of Coleridge's personal appearance that given by Carlyle of the poet as he appeared in old age (see page 24), and you will have a sufficiently vivid mental image of the man.

* He was a great friend of Sir Humphry Davy.

† Stout in later years.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

- Born, October 2, 1772.
 Enters at Christ's Hospital, July 18, 1782.
 Residence at Jesus College, Cambridge, October, 1783.
 Enlists in King's Regiment of Light Dragoons, December 2,
 1793.
 Discharged from the army, April 10, 1794.
 Visits Oxford and meets Southey, June, 1794.
 Pantisocracy scheme, autumn, 1794.
 Leaves Cambridge without degree, December, 1794.
 Settles at Bristol. Public lectures, January, 1795.
 Marries Sarah Fricker, October 4, 1795.
 Publishes first edition of poems, April, 1796.
 Issues *The Watchman*, March 1 to May 13, 1796.
 Hartley Coleridge born, September 19, 1796.
 Settles at Nether Stowey, December 31, 1796.
 Second edition of poems, June, 1797.
 The *Ancient Mariner* begun, November 13, 1797; finished,
 March 23, 1798.
 First part of *Christabel* begun, 1797.
 Receives £150 annuity from the Wedgwoods, January, 1798.
 Goes to Germany, September 16, 1798.
 Returns from Germany, July, 1799.
 Journalism with *Morning Post*, December, 1799.
 Translates Schiller's *Wallenstein*, spring, 1800.
 Settles at Greta Hall, Keswick, July 24, 1800.
 Second part of *Christabel*, autumn, 1800.
 Studies German metaphysics, 1801.
 Third edition of Poems, 1803.
 Sails for Malta, April 9, 1804.
 Travels in Sicily, August to November, 1804.
 Resides in Rome, January to May, 1806.
 Returns to England, August, 1806.
 Begins to appear again as lecturer, 1808 and following
 years.
 Settles at Allan Bank, Grasmere (with Wordsworth), September,
 1808.
 Issues *The Friend*, June 1, 1809, to March 15, 1810.

Settles at Hammersmith with the Morgans, November 3, 1810.

His tragedy *Remorse* at Drury Lane, January 23, 1813.

Settles with Mr. Gilman at Highgate, April 16, 1816.

Publication of *Christabel*, June, 1816.

Publication of *Biographia Literaria* and *Sibylline Leaves*, 1817.

The Friend revised and published, 1818.

Becomes "Royal Associate" of Royal Society of Literature, May, 1824.

Publication of *Aids to Reflection*, May to June, 1825.

Tour on the Rhine with Wordsworth, June to July, 1828.

Revised edition of poetical works, 1829.

Publication of *Church and State*, 1830.

Death, July 25, 1834.

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BRIEF SURVEY OF EIGHTEENTH CENTURY POETRY

However unique its inspiration, *The Ancient Mariner* is not an isolated or abnormal growth. By abstracting it entirely from the circumstances of its production, we can doubtless appreciate, in some measure at least, the individual and united beauties of the poem. But a completer realization of its power and charm should be sought and attained by a consideration of the poet's life in relation to his work, and by an effort to understand the poetical conditions from which that work arose. The necessarily meagre biographic detail has been presented, and it now remains briefly to indicate the main currents of English poetic literature in the century of Coleridge's birth.

The commanding figure of Dryden (1631-1700) dominates the opening years of that century. His influence soon merges itself in the more powerful influence of Pope, and our classical Augustan epoch is born. It would carry us too far afield to assign the causes for this form of literature. In brief, we may say that people had tired of the extravagant excesses of the post-Elizabethan or metaphysical school, and desired above all things correctness of form and moderateness in the sphere of the emotions. The classical movement upon its intellectual side, dramatic writing apart, is curiously akin to the earlier and contemporary school of literature in France; and international influences doubtless played an important part in maintaining the vogue of classicism in England. But the most interesting thing for us to observe is that even in the midreign of classicism evidences are not wanting of a spirit of unrest and mild revolt against the established rule. The following diagram essays to present in clear outline the characteristics of (1) the classical period, (2) the transitional period, (3) the modern romantic school.

CLASSICAL.	TRANSITIONAL.	MODERN.
1. Restriction of views on religion and philosophy. Literature is inspired by a mechanical deism	1. Religious revival. Wesley, etc.	1. Extension of religious and philosophic thought through the influence of German transcendentalism. Poetry deals with deeper problems. Element of mystery.
2. Restriction as to metrical form. The heroic couplet is <i>par excellence</i> the classical form of verse.	2. (a) Revival of blank verse—e. g., Thomson's <i>Seasons</i> , 1730; Young's <i>Night Thoughts</i> , 1745; Cowper's <i>Task</i> , 1785. (b) Imitations of Spenser—e. g., Thomson's <i>Castle of Indolence</i> , 1748; Shenstone's <i>Schoolmistress</i> , 1742; Thomas Warton's <i>Poems</i> and his <i>Observations on the Faerie Queene</i> , 1754. (c) Imitations of Milton—e. g., blank verse (see a). Influence of <i>Il Penseroso</i> on Blair, Young, Gray, etc. The sonnet form revived by Gray. (d) Odes. (Classicism had not discounted this form).	2. Extreme variety of metrical forms. Blank verse, sonnets, etc. Contrast Keats's or Swinburne's couplets with the couplets of Pope.
3. Restriction as to the language. Poetical diction abstract, colorless, and conventional.	3. Not much advance upon the classical period.	3. It was with regard to conventionalities of poetic diction, especially in the province of descriptive poetry, that Coleridge and Wordsworth made their severest attack upon the classical school. See Wordsworth's over-harsh analysis of Gray's sonnet <i>On the Death of Mr. West</i> .

CLASSICAL.	TRANSITIONAL.	MODERN.
4. The motto "Follow Nature" implied the study of the morals and manners of polite society. Nature poetry, as we understand the term, was unknown. Observe the conventional pastorals which represent the only effort to escape town life. Restricted theories of beauty, into which the outward world of the beautiful or the sublime does not enter.	4. Return to Nature in a truer sense. Thomson's <i>Seasons</i>, Macpherson's <i>Ossian</i>, 1762, Cowper, Burns, and influence of Rousseau. Crabbe, <i>The Village</i>, 1783.	4. This is where the modern school has gained its greatest triumphs. A spiritual penetration into the world of Nature—a poetical effort to realize Nature as an influence towards beauty and morality.
5. Pseudo-classicism. Scanty knowledge of Greek literature. Adoption of imitative Latin models. Artificial reproduction of classical mythology.	5. Appearance of the gods and heroes of the old Teutonic mythology—e. g., Gray's <i>Odes</i>.	5. A true appreciation of the beauties of Greek literature—e. g., Keats's <i>Hyperion</i>, Shelley's <i>Hymns to Apollo and Pan</i>, Tennyson's <i>Ulysses</i>, etc.
6. Exclusively modern—i. e., eighteenth century, where not imitatively Latin. English literature for the classicists began with Waller and Dryden.	6. Revival of interest in Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton. Extraordinary revival of mediævalism. The Gothic taste—e. g., Thomas Warton's <i>History of English Poetry</i>, 1774, and <i>Observations on the Faerie Queene</i>, 1754; J. Warton's <i>Essay on Pope</i>, 1756; Percy's <i>Reliques</i>, 1765; and the renewed interest in our old national and popular poetry <i>Ossian</i> (again), 1762; Chatterton's <i>Rowley Poems</i>, 1777; Gray's <i>Progress of Poesy</i>, 1754; Gray's <i>Bard</i>, 1757, etc.; Collins's <i>Ode on Popular Superstitions</i>; Horace Walpole's <i>Castle of Otranto</i>. Similar movement in Germany.	6. Romantic mediævalism in its culmination—e. g., Scott, Keats, Coleridge, and in our own time, Rossetti, Tennyson, Swinburne. Shelley, Byron, and Wordsworth were not affected by this, though Wordsworth aimed at the simplicity of the old ballads.

CLASSICAL.	TRANSITIONAL.	MODERN.
7. Repression of individualism. (Cf. forms of Gray and the self-restraint of Collins, but individual the French classical emotions still held in school.) Literature check. Then follows has a social basis, the influence of Rous-Achieves intellectual sea and the outbreak brilliancy, but at the of the French Revolution. Therefore, the forms most cultivated are satiric, didactic, and mock-heroic poetry. Strange dearth of classical drama, for Dryden here is the reverse of classical, and the period of Pope can only point to Addison's <i>Cato</i>. 8. Respect of constituted authority. Aristocratic tendency.	7. Timidly lyrical forms of Gray and the self-restraint of Collins, but individual the French classical emotions still held in school.) Literature check. Then follows has a social basis, the influence of Rous-Achieves intellectual sea and the outbreak brilliancy, but at the of the French Revolution. Therefore, the forms most cultivated are satiric, didactic, and mock-heroic poetry. Strange dearth of classical drama, for Dryden here is the reverse of classical, and the period of Pope can only point to Addison's <i>Cato</i>. 8. Timid beginnings of the democratic spirit—e. g., Goldsmith. Bold expression in Cowper, and especially Burns.	7. Outburst of lyrical poetry, especially Shelley, Coleridge, Keats. Emotional qualities obtain full sway. Elizabethan exuberance with (8) an assertion of individualism. A termination of poets to follow the bent of their own individual genius, and a realization of the force of the democratic spirit. Shelley and Byron are revolutionary poets.

It is not within the province of this book to expand the above material. Some comprehension of it is, however, necessary before attaining a just appreciation of the work performed by Coleridge and Wordsworth for English literature. What is especially important to observe is that the path had been broken for them by their predecessors, and that they were not absolutely pioneers of progress in the poetic wilderness. Indeed, Wordsworth is careful to acknowledge that Thomson's *Seasons* had given English poetry its true direction in diverting men's attention from the artificial rhetoric of society to

the invigorating world of nature. The other transitional processes indicated in the tabular summary will be developed by the instructor in more or less detail in proportion to the requirements of the class. The relation of these tendencies to Coleridge's poetical theories may easily be determined. English ballad literature, owing to its peculiar significance with reference to *The Ancient Mariner*, demands a special treatment, and an account of its characteristics will not be inappropriate here.

BALLAD POETRY

The revived interest in our old national poetry, which dates from the publication of Percy's *Reliques* in 1765, led to some of the most important developments in Continental literature. In England, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Scott, and Keats were strongly influenced by the ballad movement, and were not slow to acknowledge their debt to Bishop Percy's publication. Wordsworth confessed that English poetry had been absolutely redeemed by them. "I do not think that there is a writer in verse of the present day who would not be proud to acknowledge his obligations to the *Reliques*. I know that it is so with my friends, and, for myself, I am happy in this occasion to make a public avowal of my own."^{*}

The influence of these old national ballads of England upon *The Ancient Mariner* is so obvious that a description of the characteristics of the genuine ballad must precede any adequate investigation of the modern poem. How much Coleridge owed to the traditional form is a question which the student is recommended to examine on the basis of the information which follows.

^{*} Appendix to the Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*.

The Ballad, its Nature and its Origin

With regard to the definition of the term "ballad" there has been much needless confusion, at least in the popular mind. The question of the ultimate origin of the ballad is likewise fraught with confusion; but this arises from the necessary mystery which surrounds a creative process, and constitutes in itself one of the most difficult of literary problems.

Confusion as to the name

The confusion with regard to the name makes it almost necessary to define what the ballad is not, before determining what it is. No one probably would confound the artificial ballade of the schools (the product of French imitation) with the native ballad of popular growth. But a great many people do persist in applying the term to modern poems of the type of *Barbara Frietchie*, *The Wreck of the Hesperus*, or the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

These narrative poems have all borrowed certain surface characteristics from the genuine ballad, something of its simplicity and quaintness, perhaps, but with a distant suggestion at the best of the unaffected *naïveté* and artless manner of the original type. This primitive form, as we must imagine it once to have existed, was essentially a narrative poem in lyrical stanzaic form, designed, in its earliest stages at least, to serve as an accompaniment for the dance, bearing no traces of individual authorship, and preserved mainly by oral tradition. It is therefore imperative, for the sake of precision, to discriminate absolutely between the artistic imitation of popular ballads and the genuine ballad of the people. To make this distinction clearer, a short

account must be given of the more important theories connected with the origin of the ballad properly so called.

Origin of the Ballad

We are here confronted with two rival theories. The question roughly divides itself as follows:—Did the ballad make itself?—or was it produced like any poem in modern times by some individual whose talents singled him out as the versifier or bard of his rough community? The first theory, it will be observed, almost eliminates the individual in favor of the primitive community. The second theory insists upon the positive intervention of the individual in the shaping of the ballad, and holds that the circumstances of oral transmission, by which all the ancient ballads were preserved, are sufficient to account for their popular characteristics. They were thus subjected to constant variation, and all traces of individual authorship were swiftly obliterated. On the other hand, supporters of the communal theory insisted “that the ballad must be the outcome and the expression of the whole community, and that this community must be homogeneous—must belong to a time when, in the common atmosphere of ignorance, so far as book-lore is concerned, one habit of thought and one standard of action animate every member from prince to ploughboy. Ballads of the primitive type—of course we do not know them in their original form—were the product of a people as yet undivided into a lettered and an unlettered class. When learning came among the folk it drove the ballad first into byways, and then altogether out of living literature.”*

* Gummere. Introduction to *Old English Ballads*, xxvii.

It will be readily seen that, even if we grant the assumption of race authorship, it would be impossible to account for the words and melody of the ballads without presupposing that some one first said or sang them. We therefore find that the modern authorities on ballad literature abandon both of the above theories on their extreme side, and chiefly concern themselves with adjusting the respective shares of poet and people in the making of the primitive ballad. Thus the late Professor Child, the supreme authority on this question, writes on the subject of ballad poetry as follows: "Though they do not write themselves, as William Grimm has said, still the author counts for nothing, and it is not by mere accident, but with the best reason, that they have come down to us anonymous."

We must imagine that some minstrel, skilled in music and song, has gathered the people together on an occasion of great significance. All his audience are thrilling with the excitement of some recent martial event, or stirred by the memory of some feat of warlike prowess. The deeds of the hero are familiar to all. His history, whether recent or legendary, is common property; and they are now gathered together to celebrate him in dance and song. Some one suggests a well-known episode in his career, and forthwith the minstrel strikes a martial strain and chants the exploits of the hero in rude and broken verse, improvised for the occasion. He gives out the refrain, and the people repeat it in chorus while he meditates the verse which follows. Any one who thinks of a suitable verse may contribute it. The respective parts of poet and populace are here discernible. The actual words and melody must emanate from the individual, but the sentiments are of the people.

The minstrel is keenly alive to the effect of his stanzas upon his hearers, and when he carries his ballad wares to the neighboring castle he is careful to omit what has not given pleasure.

Meanwhile this same rude ballad, which we have seen in the making, has also been carried hither and thither by all who had sung its easy melodies, and they too refashion it to their liking, forgetting and changing, adding and striking out. Finally, if the ballad has stood the wear and tear of time, it is, at last, in one or many of its forms, committed to manuscript, and perpetuated, perhaps, after many centuries, in printer's ink.

General Characteristics of the Ballad

Being thus the product of an unsophisticated and unreflecting age, the genuine ballad is necessarily *naïve*, and marked by an utter absence of subjectivity and self-consciousness. Coming from the people as a whole, "from the compact body as yet undivided by lettered or unlettered taste, it represents the sentiment neither of individuals nor of a class. It inclines to the narrative, the concrete and the exterior, and it has no mark of the artist and his sentiment."* In view also of its spontaneous character, and because the episodes it presents are intimately known to the audience, its narrative is extremely broken by frequent omissions and abrupt transitions, while repetitions and stock descriptive phrases are constantly resorted to in order to facilitate memory.

As remarkable as the absence of reflection and sentimentality in the substance is the lack of poetic adornment in the style. Metaphors and similes are rare, and

* Gummere. Introduction, p. xvi.

when found are usually exceedingly simple—"red as a rose," "as green as grass"—conventional phrases that all ballads share in common. There is never any intention to produce a fine poetic effect by their means. Iteration is the leading characteristic of ballad style, and the story is frequently told by "incremental repetition," which Professor Gummere describes as the repetition of a question with its answer. This may go on from stanza to stanza until the poem is completed.

It is impossible to quote any short ballad which should exemplify all these qualities. The ballad of *Sir Patrick Spens* is given here because of its undoubted excellence, and partly also because it was an acknowledged favorite with Coleridge. It lacks refrain, and its extreme brevity did not render repetition or reiteration essential (but notice lines 8 and 20). In other respects it adequately enough represents the general ballad characteristics.

First, as to poetic treatment. It deals with a pathetic theme in a manly and straightforward way. There is a total absence of sentimentality and moralizing. The theme is entered upon at once with no labored preparatory description. The events of the narrative were familiar, and superfluity of detail is therefore shunned. The sudden transition from description to dialogue is especially characteristic.

Secondly, as to form. It is written in the usual ballad measure, like *The Ancient Mariner*, having four verses in each stanza, riming a, b, c, b, with four accents in the first and third verses and three each in the second and fourth.

The general movement is iambic, but, as in *The Ancient Mariner*, there are not infrequent variations from this type, e. g. :

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

1. Omission of unstressed syllables, especially in the initial foot, e.g., stanza 2, line 1.

2. Anapaestic movement, e. g., stanza 6, line 4.

There are frequent substitutions in ballad poetry of trochees for iambs. The essential thing seems to be to preserve merely the proper number of accents.

RIME.—Initial rime or alliteration was the system of Anglo-Saxon verse. In ballad poetry alliteration may serve as an adornment, but never takes the place of rime.

The riming system of this typical ballad does not therefore materially differ from our poem, except that assonance is occasionally substituted for ordinary rime; e. g., stanzas 6 and 11. Internal rime, so frequently employed by Coleridge, will be noticed in stanza 11, line 1.

SIR PATRICK SPENS

1. The king sits in Dumferling toune,
Drinking the blude-reid wine :
“ O whar will I get good sailor,
To sail this schip of mine ? ”
2. Up and spak an eldern knight,
Sat at the king's richt kne :
“ Sir Patrick Spence is the best sailor,
That sails upon the se.”
3. The king has written a braid * letter,
And signed it wi his hand,
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spence,
Was walking on the sand.
4. The first line that Sir Patrick red,
A loud lauch † lauched he ;
The next line that Sir Patrick red,
The teir blinded his ee.

* Open.

† Laugh.

5. "O wha is this has don this deid,
This ill deid don to me,
To send me out this time o' the yeir,
To sail upon the se ?
6. "Mak hast, mak haste, my mirry men all,
Our guid schip sails the morne : "
"O say na sae, my master deir,
For I feir a deadlie storme.
7. "Late, late yestreen I saw the new moone,
Wi the auld moone in hir arme,
And I feir, I feir, my deir master,
That we will cum to harme."
8. O our Scots nobles wer richt laith
To weet their cork-heild schoone :
Bot lang owre a' the play wer playd,
Thair hats they swam aboone.*
9. O lang, lang may their ladies sit,
Wi thair fans into their hand,
Or eir they se Sir Patrick Spence
Cum sailing to the land.
10. O lang, lang may the ladies stand,
Wi thair gold kems in their hair,
Waiting for thair ain deir lords,
For they'll se thame na mair.
11. Haf owre, haf owre to Aberdour,
It's fiftie fadom deip,
And thair lies guid Sir Patrick Spence,
Wi the Scots lords at his feit.

Application to the Ancient Mariner

The student should examine the text of Coleridge's poem, and note his adherence to or divergence from the true ballad characteristics : 1. As to the method of composition. 2. As to the general effect of the poem. 3. As to form, with reference alike to prosody and language,

* They were drowned.

THE LYRICAL BALLADS

(Containing *The Ancient Mariner* and other poems of Coleridge and Wordsworth)

It may be taken for granted that the student has gained a general idea of the poetic conditions in the eighteenth century. It remains now to fix our attention upon two tendencies which were striving for the ascendancy in the last years of the century, when classicism had quite spent its force. A quotation from Professor Dowden will adequately describe these tendencies, and aid us the better to appreciate the importance of the *Lyrical Ballads*.

"In the literature of the time there were two powerful tendencies, each of which was liable to excess when it operated alone, each of which needed to work in harmony with the other, and to take something into itself from the other. A little before the death of Johnson, English poetry had almost reached the lowest ebb. It has often been said that its revival was due to the excitement and enthusiasm caused by the Revolution in France; but this is certainly untrue. In 1785 appeared Cowper's poem, *The Task*. Two years previously the most remarkable of Crabbe's earlier group of poems, *The Village*, had been published. In 1786 the Kilmarnock edition of the poems of Burns was issued. Thus our poetry had sprung into sudden and splendid life before that memorable year, the centenary of which has recently been celebrated in Paris. And by what means did English poetry renew its life and regain its vigor? By a return to Nature. Burns sang direct out of his own warm heart and out of the joys and sorrows of his fellows. The daisy in the furrow, the mouse in the stubble field, the dying ewe in the ditch, the rustic

patriarch among his children and servants, the humors of Scottish drink, the humors of Scottish ecclesiastical parties, and the passions of his own wayward heart supplied him with the themes of his song. Cowper turned from the wire-drawn abstractions in verse which had done duty as poetry and looked around him in his walks about Olney, or filled his senses and spirit with the domestic pleasures of Mary Unwin's home, and uttered in verse the feelings aroused in him by his garden, his walk in the crisp December morning, his evening fireside, his newspaper and easy-chair. And Crabbe resolved to set down for once the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about the life of the peasant, or the rough fisher on our eastern coasts. He was sick of the ideality of sweet Auburns, and of Corydons complaining of their amorous pains, 'the only pains, alas, they never feel.' He aimed at being what in our present critical phraseology we term a realist or naturalist.

"... But with this tendency there coexisted another which was also strong. It was the tendency toward romance which gave their popularity to the *Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*, which appears in the modern-antiques of Chatterton, and in connection with a sentiment supposed to be that of primitive poetry in Macpherson's *Ossian*. The Gothic revival which in our century became learned and antiquarian was then sentimental and imaginative. As Crabbe may serve to represent the extreme of naturalism in art, so 'Monk' Lewis may serve to represent the other extreme, the extravagance of the romantic tendency. His *Castle Spectre*, a play brimful of supernatural horrors, was produced in the year in which Coleridge and Wordsworth met at Nether Stowey, and it had a run of sixty nights. . . . The gross

marvel and mystery amassed in 'The Monk' would suffice for a library of our modern tales of horror.

"Here, then, were two movements in our literature, each operating apart from the other, and each prone to excess—naturalism, tending to a hard, dry, literal manner, unilluminated by the light of imagination; romance, tending to become a coarse revel in material horrors. English poetry needed first that romance should be saved and ennobled by the presence and the power of truth, and, secondly, that naturalism, without losing any of its fidelity to fact, should be saved and ennobled by the presence and the power of imagination. And this was precisely what Coleridge and Wordsworth contributed to English poetry in their joint volume of *Lyrical Ballads*, which in consequence may justly be described as marking if not making an epoch in the history of our literature."*

Or, as Professor Herford very tersely puts it, with an important reference to the mystical poetry of another predecessor, Blake: "Here the two lines of advance along which poetry had been slowly borne by 'realists' like Cowper and Crabbe, and visionaries like Blake, at length met. Here, too, the crude marvel-mongering of the Radcliffian school was supplemented by the psychological veracity, without which the marvellous can not be the basis of poetry. Horace Walpole contrived 'marvels' by violently distorting Nature; Mrs. Radcliffe, with more extensive skill in devising them, was careful to explain them away. To Wordsworth and Coleridge the world of familiar undoubted things was itself full of expressive affinities and inexplicable suggestion."†

* Professor Dowden, *New Studies in Literature*, pp. 336-338.

† C. H. Herford, *The Age of Wordsworth*, pp. 152-153.

COLERIDGE THE POET

"No man has all the resources of poetry in such profusion. His fancy and diction would long ago have placed him above all his contemporaries had they been under the direction of a sound judgment and a steady will."—*Sir Walter Scott*.

"Of Coleridge's best verses I venture to affirm that the world has nothing like them, and can never have; that they are of the highest kind and their own. An age that should neglect or forget Coleridge might neglect or forget any poet that ever lived. That may be said of him which can hardly be said of any but the greatest among men, that come what may to the world in course of time, it will never see his place filled."—*Algernon Charles Swinburne*.

"Yet Coleridge is, or may be reckoned a great poet, because every now and then he captures in verse that indefinable emotion which is less articulately expressed in music, and in some unutterable way he transports us into the world of dream and desire. This is a very vague fashion of saying what hardly permits itself to be said. We might put it that Coleridge has, on occasion, the power to move us, as we are moved by the most rarely beautiful cosmic effects of magic lights and shadows; by the silver on lakes for a chosen moment in the dawn of twilight; by the fragrant deeps of dewy forests; by sudden, infrequent passions of heart and memory; and by unexpected potencies of imagination. What those things, and such things as these, can do in life, Coleridge can do in verse. His world becomes 'an unsubstantial fairy place,' and yet more real than the world of experience; it is a place which we may have remembered out of a previous life, or may have foreseen, in a glance of

the not-ourselves in which we mysteriously move and have our being. Coleridge has, in brief, 'the key of the happy golden land,' but he seldom opens the portals that unfold themselves to the sound of his music.

'He on honey dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of paradise,

and therefore with music 'he builds that dome in air' of his pleasure-house.

"It is his possession of this gift, the rarest gift, that makes Coleridge great; his own consciousness could not tell whence the gift came, nor why it came so seldom."—*Andrew Lang*.

"His spiritualized nature teems with color and melody and perfume; and his early poetry contains several pieces from which all direct political and metaphysical contents falls away. The *Songs of the Pixies* (1793), the *Lines on an Autumnal Evening*, and *Lewti* (1794), are pervaded by this fine sensuousness in which no other English poet quite resembles Coleridge. His touch has at once the voluptuous quality of Keats, and the mystic quality of Shelley. He paints the russet-suited landscape of eighteenth century idyllists from the rich and varied palette which we are accustomed to call Celtic. The clouds are of amber and purple. The fragrance of furze and bean-flower haunts the page. Yet while all things retain their full value as sensation, they are invested with dreamy semblances of things beyond sensation; they are not solid and opaque, but full of half lights and elusive suggestions. . . ."

Both Coleridge and Wordsworth were, "as Wordsworth said, 'prophets of Nature,' though Coleridge's prophecy was far less continuous, many-sided, and serene, and both were romantic poets. . . . Both are the

great English masters, as Goethe, who unites and transcends their spheres, is the great European master of poetic realism; both possess, though not with equal security, the region in which Romance and Nature meet, though Coleridge reaches it by 'the ladder of the impossible,' Wordsworth by the steeper and more treacherous ladder of the commonplace."—*C. H. Herford*.

"No doubt we have in Coleridge the most striking example in literature of a great genius given in trust to a nerveless will and a fitful purpose. But I think the secret of his doing no more in poetry is to be found in the fact that the judgment, so far from being absent, grew to be there in excess. His critical sense rose like a forbidding apparition in the path of his poetic production. . . . It is enough for us here that he has written some of the most poetical poetry in the language, and one poem, *The Ancient Mariner*, not only unparalleled, but unapproached in its kind, and that kind of the rarest. It is marvelous in its mastery over that delightfully fortuitous inconsequence that is the adamant logic of dreamland."—*James Russell Lowell*.

"Coleridge's poetical performance is like some exotic plant, just managing to blossom a little in the somewhat un-English air of his southwestern birthplace, but never quite well there. What shapes itself for criticism as the main phenomenon of Coleridge's poetic life is not, as with most true poets, the gradual development of a poetic gift, determined, enriched, retarded by the actual circumstances of the poet's life, but the sudden blossoming, through one short season, of such a gift already perfect in its kind, which thereafter deteriorates as suddenly, with something like premature old age."—*Walter Pater*.

"What Coleridge did well was unique, but it was very little, and the volume we have from him influences

us with all the sadness that a garden does in which two or three beautiful flowers rise and flower perfectly, but in which the rest are choked with weeds and run to seed. And to those who can compare the things of art with the things of soul and heart, the analogy has its own profound moral lesson. . . . Surely few men have ever loved mankind more than this large-hearted creature of the sunny mist. And inasmuch as he loved much, his faults are forgiven."—*Rev. Stopford Brooke.*

"His soul fared forth (as from the deep home-grove
The father-songster plies the hour-long quest),
To feed his soul-brood hungering in the nest;
But his warm Heart, the mother-bird, above
Their callow fledgling progeny still hove
With tented roof of wings and fostering breast
Till the Soul fed the soul-brood. Richly blest
From Heaven their growth, whose food was Human Love.

"Yet ah! like desert pools that show the stars
Once in long leagues,—even such the scarce-snatched hours
Which deepening pain left to his lordliest powers:—
Heaven lost through spider-trammeled prison bars.
Six years, from sixty saved! Yet kindling skies
Own them, a beacon to our centuries."

Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

"He has been admirably compared by Mr. Swinburne to a footless bird of paradise. Another great poet, Mr. Swinburne's friend, Dante Rossetti, has a far different comparison, though here also to a bird, in his sonnet on Coleridge, and the lines are valuable, at least as containing a fragment of sound criticism." (Here follows the sonnet.) . . . "I conceive the leading point about Coleridge's work," wrote Dante Rossetti, 'is its human love'; and yet Rossetti least of all men could be insensible to its romantic beauty or the incantation of its verse. If we could express the whole truth about

Coleridge, we must find some mode of reconciling the conception of him as the footless bird of paradise with our knowledge of his affluent and sweet humanity."—*Professor Dowden.*

"*Kubla Khan* does not belong to human life, and it stands alone for melody in English poetry. Whenever Coleridge rises into this exquisite melody in its perfection, i.e. also rises into that subtilized imaginative world of thought, half supernatural, half natural, which was special to him, and which pervades *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel* and a few other poems. The music and the sphere of the poem are partly beyond this world of ours. Yet in part they touch it."—*Rev. Stopford Brooke.*

"In precisely the same way, I suppose, as the best journalists—i. e., those that give the most vivid impressions of what they have seen to their readers—are men who have apparently devoted a wonderfully short space of time to their observations, so it would seem that for the writing of real sea poetry an extended acquaintance with maritime conditions is not merely unnecessary but hampering. I have come to this conclusion reluctantly but inevitably, for in common with all reading seafarers I have noticed that we may look in vain for sea poetry from sailors. Sailors have written verse, Falconer's *Shipwreck* to wit, but between that peculiar poem and the marvelous majesty, profound insight, and truly amazing knowledge of deep sea secrets exhibited in *The Ancient Mariner* how great a gulf is fixed.

"'Only those who brave its dangers comprehend its mystery,' rings true, and yet it is no less true that Longfellow, very little more of a sailor than Coleridge, has also interpreted the mystery of the mighty ocean in

a manner (most sailors think) only second in true poetic power to that of Coleridge. To the well-read sailor—and there are far more of them than one would imagine, remembering the poverty of his literary output—Coleridge always stands easily highest, Longfellow next, and Byron next as the interpreters of the voices of the sea. . . .”—*F. T. Bullen, Literature, April 13, 1901, page 281.*

It is only necessary to read Coleridge's poems attentively, and with some regard to the order of their production, to appreciate the value of the foregoing critical estimates. The early poems will be found extravagant in their sentiment, rhetorical and redundant in their expression. Occasionally, as in the *Songs of the Pixies*, and in that delicate fragrant *Lewti*, there occur lines and phrases that seem to anticipate the elfin melodies of his riper maturity; but, as a whole, these early poems only survive on the strength of his later reputation. They serve at the most to show the general direction of his intellectual opinions, and to illustrate the singular effervescence of his sympathies.

Mr. Walter Pater has drawn attention to the sudden blossoming and the no less sudden decay of Coleridge's poetical powers. In swift succession upon his intimacy with Wordsworth, and, it is to be feared, in singular accord with his addiction to the opium habit, we find him producing poems that are absolutely unique in their kind, unparalleled and unapproached in English literature. With a like suddenness the flood of inspiration ebbed away, and for the thirty closing years of his life Coleridge's utterances in verse are fragmentary and unequal. "The cause of this decline and fall was opium eating," writes Mr. Stopford Brooke; and we are even justified in assuming that the stimulus of opium before

his faculties grew jaded from its excessive use had not a little to do with the sudden and luxurious blossoming of his brief poetic season. The poetry of the years 1797-1798 stands markedly apart from and above the poetry which immediately preceded it, and its charm is peculiarly derived from its supernormal qualities. The years which follow are marked by desultory and despairing efforts to regain this fugitive magic. "Opium gives and takes away," De Quincey said. "It defeats the steady habit of exertion; but it creates spasms of irregular exertion. It ruins the natural power of life; but it creates preternatural paroxysms of intermitting power. . . . We are of opinion that it killed Coleridge as a poet. Poetry can flourish only in the atmosphere of happiness. But subtle and perplexed investigations of difficult problems are among the commonest resources for beguiling the sense of misery."

This creative period of Coleridge's genius produced three of the most remarkable poems in the language, *Kubla Khan*, *The Ancient Mariner*, and *Christabel*, where his weird imagination explores the unearthly realms of the supernatural; and a number of only less remarkable poems, in which he gives expression to his ardent human sympathies, whether inspired by tranquil domestic incidents, as *This Lime Tree Bower my Prison*, *The Nightingale*, etc., or occasioned by the agitating political conditions of those unsettled times, as *France* and *Fears in Solitude*. His peculiar place among English poets is undeniably held by virtue of the three first-named poems; but Professor Dowden has done well to insist upon the excellence of those other poems which represent at once the human and the artistic side of his genius.

The qualities which have gained Coleridge his distinguished place among English poets are not difficult

perhaps to analyze, yet we may never hope to have them reproduced by another poet with a like subtleness of instinct and in so perfect a fusion. He commands the regions of the supernatural, but at the same time he makes his appeal to us from the region of human sympathies. The readers of his poetry will be surprised by the grace and suggestiveness of his allusions to Nature when, as in *This Lime Tree Bower*, he seeks to reproduce with delicate exactitude her subtler appearance of beauty, and will also be astonished to observe his power to evoke her grander attributes, as in the sublime exordium to the *Ode to France*, and in the passages of *The Ancient Mariner* which reproduce the free untrammelled aspects of the sea and sky.

It may be confidently said, in conclusion, that Coleridge fills an unique position among English poets. The verbal felicities of his diction, and the strangeness and beauty of his imagination, are his most distinctive claims to greatness. Yet his verse rarely rises from mere melody to the higher regions of poetic harmony. His instrument is a flute of incredible sweetness, but the organ roll of Milton gives forth a deeper and a richer sound. Again, his imaginative vision is unique, but it is at the same time abnormal and limited in range. He has not the emotional fervor which lyrical poetry demands, and his odes are the outcome rather of intellectual conviction than of passion. The *Ode to Dejection*, which draws its inspiration from the intensity of his despair, is the only poem in which we hear the genuine lyrical cry. His dramas are not successful, for he lacked constructive ability, and his metaphysical views of life disturbed his vision.

But whatever deductions we may find it necessary to make, nothing can alter the fact that Coleridge was and

will remain a force in English literature. After his short creative career it was impossible for English poetry to relapse into the degenerate condition in which Coleridge found it, and from which Coleridge and Wordsworth labored successfully to set it free. To them we owe our advance from the cramping artificiality of the eighteenth century; and though our poetry may again become over-cultivated and over-refined, the influence of these great poets will remain to point it permanently in its true direction.

COLERIDGE THE PHILOSOPHER

The religious and political philosophy of Coleridge, and his metaphysical theories in general, open up too wide a field for investigation here. A brief statement must therefore suffice. John Stuart Mill, the exponent of a very different philosophy, paid to Coleridge this tribute: "No one has contributed more to shape the opinions among young men, who can be said to have any opinions at all." Although this generous estimate is not confined to his theological influence, it is nevertheless within the domain of religious thought that his philosophical teaching has proved most stimulating.

COLERIDGE AS POLITICAL PHILOSOPHER

Coleridge's political views are represented by the Pantisocratic scheme in his revolutionary youth, and in his maturer years by his articles in the *Morning Post* of 1799-1802, and by the following works of a still later period; *Statesman's Manual* (1816), *Second Lay Sermon* (1817), *The Friend* (1818), and *Church and State* (1830).

Coleridge approached the French Revolution upon the intellectual rather than the emotional side, attracted by its specious return to first principles. He was never other than repelled by its savage abandonment to passion; and his *Ode to France*, or *The Recantation*, expresses the disillusionment which these excesses and this desertion of high ideals engendered in his mind. The invasion of Switzerland by the revolutionary troops made permanent the alienation of his sympathies. Henceforward his contempt for France was associated with a distrust of all radical measures, and together with Wordsworth and Southey he adopted conservative theories that were almost reactionary in their scope. His conservatism is liberally interpreted by Professor Dowden as a desire "not to attempt to displace the old conceptions in politics and morals," but "to discover the vital centre of each conception," and "to deliver this from the incrustations of custom and unilluminated tradition."

COLERIDGE AS A RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHER AND METAPHYSICIAN

Coleridge in his early years was a follower of Priesley in religion and of Hartley in philosophy. He was therefore a Unitarian, with marked tendencies towards materialism. He had, however, from his youth been strongly attracted by the philosophy of the mystics, and it was a revival of these tendencies which made him waver in his adherence to the materialistic theories of Hartley. He eagerly perused Berkeley, Leibnitz, and Spinoza without finding a secure foundation for his religious or philosophical faith. "I found myself all aloft. Doubts rushed in, broke upon me from the fountains of the great deep, and fell from the windows of heaven."

It was in this condition of spiritual bewilderment that he sought a refuge in Germany. He there fell under the influence of the German mystics, and vigorously perused the great modern systems of Kant and Schelling.

Coleridge is therefore not a thoroughly original philosopher. His chief originality lies in his fruitful application of those borrowed theories to the conditions of English religious thought.

He found religion in England dominated by the mechanical theories of Paley, and barely emerging from the comfortable deism of the eighteenth century. His life's work was devoted to making religion less purely mechanical, and lifting it to a higher moral and spiritual plane. Revelation resting upon miracles, and the existence of a God established by mechanical devices, had no appeal for him. Rather was his life a protest against this state of things; and in the nature of that protest against artificiality in the sphere of literature, morals, and religion, we find the true unity which binds his scattered work together. "In metaphysical speculation," writes Professor Dowden, "in ethics, in politics, in theology, in biblical criticism, in the criticism of literature, he suggested a new exposition of received formulas. He quickened the sense of religion by reducing or attempting to reduce dogma, imposed from without, to facts of the spiritual consciousness and their inner significance."

Coleridge's religious teaching, we may conclude, is in a large measure responsible alike for the Broad Church and the Tractarian movements of the middle of the nineteenth century. The dominant single influence in the English Church at that period, the Rev. F. D. Maurice, was confessedly a disciple of Coleridge.

COLERIDGE THE CRITIC

Literary criticism, like theology, had been mechanically inspired in the eighteenth century. Dryden had partially laid the foundations for a more generous system which should be at once comparative and historical in its scope. His liberal principles, however, had sundered collapse, and Dr. Johnson, the law-giver of the eighteenth century, was the incarnation of all that is arbitrary, dogmatic, and artificial in the judgment of literary products. His was the magisterial-dictatorial method, proceeding from the assumption of certain fixed laws which must imperatively be adhered to, or the literary result was worthless in his eyes. The weakness of the system lay in the arbitrary application to modern conditions of laws derived, for the most part, from a timid study of the lesser Latin poets. For Johnson therefore Milton's *Comus* was "a drama in the epic style, inelegantly splendid, and tediously instructive"; in *Lycidas* "the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers displeasing"; and the *Sonnets* "deserve not any particular criticism. For of the best it can only be said that they are not bad, . . . these little pieces may be dismissed without much anxiety." In Johnson's opinion the summit of poetic excellence had been reached in Pope. It was in vain to expect a further development. "New sentiments and new images others may produce; but to attempt any further improvement of versification will be dangerous. Art and diligence have now done their best, and what shall be added will be the effort of tedious toil and needless anxiety."

Professor Herford concisely sums up the value of Coleridge's contribution to criticism as follows: "It was reserved for Coleridge and Carlyle to lay the foundations

of the relative or historical method in criticism, with its attribute of catholic and many-sided sympathy. . . . Every true poem was thence by its very nature original; it presented universal truth under an absolutely individual form. It must therefore be judged, not by any external standard, but by the laws of the 'situation' from which it springs; and this can only be done when the critic imaginatively re-creates it in his mind, thinking the poet's thought after him, sympathetically entering into the whole process of its growth. It is the significance of the romantic criticism therefore to have substituted for the absolute method of judging by reference to an external standard of 'taste,' a method at once imaginative and 'historical.' * "The change is significant. It makes the poet, not the critic, master of the situation. It implies that the critic is no longer to give the law to the poet; but that, in some sense more or less complete, he must begin, if not by putting himself in the place of the individual writer as he was when at work on the individual poem, at least by taking upon himself—by making his own as far as may be—what he may conceive to be the essential temperament of the poet." †

It is needless to say that though a spirit of unity pervades Coleridge's criticism, and binds it closely to other portions of his work, the criticism itself is presented in his usual formless and haphazard manner. The volume devoted to *Shakespeare and Other Dramatists* is the most coherent exposition of his views, but hardly surpasses in critical insight certain portions of the *Biographia Literaria*, the chapters more particularly which deal with the problem of Wordsworth's poetry.

* C. H. Herford, *The Age of Wordsworth*, pp. 51, 52.

† C. E. Vaughan, *English Literary Criticism*, London, Blackie & Son, pp. lxxxii, lxxxiii.

Simultaneously with the German Schlegel, Coleridge undertook to destroy the prevailing French estimate of Shakespeare as a "barbarian of genius," "a model of Gothic extravagance," who reached occasional heights of sublimity despite his constant abandonment of the beaten paths of art. Coleridge never denied that the great dramatist sometimes wandered astray from paths which others had beaten; what he asserted was that he followed with implicit confidence the laws of his own intellect, that his judgment was in all respects commensurate with his genius, and that his work attains in consequence to an organic unity which eludes the pursuit of artificial investigation.

Into Coleridge's acute criticism of Wordsworth it is not necessary to enter. The *Biographia Literaria*, that curious medley of narrative, philosophy, and criticism, which contains his profound views upon his brother poet, interests the student of Coleridge's opinions more especially for its skilful application of his philosophical theories to the subject of literary criticism.

CONTEMPORARY OPINIONS ON THE ANCIENT MARINER

The Ancient Mariner was a puzzle to the critics of Coleridge's day, and a perplexing problem even to his own friends. Southey, impatient of its element of the marvellous, called it in *The Critical Review* "a Dutch attempt at German sublimity." *The New Monthly* characterized it as "the strangest cock and bull story that ever we saw." Wordsworth laid the blame on it for the failure of the *Lyrical Ballads*, and upon Coleridge's desire to withdraw it from the second edition wrote the following patronising note:

Note to the Ancient Mariner.—"I can not refuse myself the gratification of informing such Readers as

may have been pleased with this Poem, or with any part of it, that they owe their pleasure in some sort to me; as the Author was himself very desirous that it should be suppressed. This wish had arisen from a consciousness of the defects of the Poem, and from a knowledge that many persons have been much displeased with it. The Poem of my Friend has indeed great defects; first, that the principal person has no distinct character, either in his profession of Mariner, or as a human being, who having been long under the control of supernatural impressions, might be supposed himself to partake of something supernatural; secondly, that he does not act, but is continually acted upon; thirdly, that the events, having no necessary connection, do not produce each other; and lastly, that the imagery is somewhat too laboriously accumulated. Yet the Poem contains many delicate touches of passion, and indeed the passion is everywhere true to nature; a great number of the stanzas present beautiful images, and are expressed with unusual felicity of language; and the versification, tho' the metre is itself unfit for long poems, is harmonious and artfully varied, exhibiting the utmost powers of that metre, and every variety of which it is capable. It therefore appeared to me that these several merits (the first of which, namely, that of the passion, is of the highest kind) gave to the Poem a value which is not often possessed by better Poems. On this account I requested of my Friend to permit me to republish it."

This complacent criticism drew from Lamb the following letter by way of rebuke:

"For me I was never so affected with any human tale. After first reading it I was totally possessed with it for many days. I dislike all the miraculous part of it, but the feelings of the man under the operation of such

scenery dragged me along like Tom Pipe's magic whistle. I totally differ from your idea that the Mariner should have had a character and profession. This is a beauty in *Gulliver's Travels*, where the mind is kept in a placid state of little wonderments; but the Ancient Mariner undergoes such trials as overwhelm and bury all individuality or memory of what he was—like the state of a man in a bad dream, one terrible peculiarity of which is, that all consciousness of personality is gone. Your other observation is, I think as well, a little unfounded. The Mariner, from being conversant in supernatural events, has acquired a supernatural and strange cast of phrase, eye, appearance, etc., which frighten the wedding guest. You will excuse my remarks, because I am hurt and vexed that you should think it necessary, with a prose apology, to open the eyes of dead men that can not see."

The absolute uniqueness of the poem was realized by Coleridge himself alone in his generation. "*The Ancient Mariner* can not be imitated, nor the poem *Love*. They may be excelled; they are not imitable."

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

The poem was first printed anonymously in the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798, with the title, *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere, in Seven*
 The text. *Parts*, and a brief prose argument prefixed.

The second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800, contained many important alterations in the text, besides a consistent modernizing of the antiquated spelling. The Argument was extended as follows: "How a Ship having first sailed to the Equator, was driven by storms

to the cold Country towards the South Pole; how the Ancient Mariner, cruelly and in contempt of the laws of hospitality, killed a Sea-bird; and how he was followed by many strange Judgements; and in what manner he came back to his own Country." (The most interesting changes in the text are embodied in the notes of this present edition.) The poem was again reprinted in *Lyrical Ballads*, 1802 and 1805, without much change from the text of 1800, but with the omission of the Argument. Further changes were made in the poem before its next appearance in the *Sibylline Leaves*, 1817, when the marginal gloss and the motto from Burnet* were also added. Subsequent editions before and after the poet's death contained no modifications worthy of note.

Facile credo, etc. "I can easily believe that there are more Invisible than Visible beings in the Universe,
 The motto. . . . but who shall declare to us the family of
 all these, and acquaint us with the Agreements, Differences, and peculiar Talents which are to be found among them? [What is their work? Where are their dwelling-places?] It is true, Human Wit has always desired a knowledge of these things, though it has never yet attained it. . . . I will own that it is very profitable, sometimes to contemplate in the Mind, as in a Draught, the Image of the greater and better World; lest the Soul, being accustomed to the Trifles of this present Life, should contract itself too much, and altogether rest in mean Cogitations; but, in the mean Time, we must take Care to keep to the Truth, and observe

* Thomas Burnet (2-1715) was master of the Charterhouse School and chaplain to William III. The extract in the motto is from his *Archæologiæ Philosophicæ*, a treatise on the *Origin of Things*.

Moderation, that we may distinguish Certain from Uncertain Things, and Day from Night,"*

The origin of *The Ancient Mariner* was described by Wordsworth to Miss Fenwick as follows: "In the

Circum-
stances of
composition. autumn of 1797 [November] he (Coleridge), my sister, and myself started from Alfoxden pretty late in the afternoon with a view to visit Linton and the Valley of Stones, near to it. Accordingly we set off and proceeded along the Quantock Hills toward Watchet, and in the course of this walk was planned the poem of *The Ancient Mariner*, founded on a dream, as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend Mr. Cruikshank. Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention, but certain parts I suggested; for example, some crime was to be committed which should bring upon the Old Navigator, as Coleridge afterwards delighted to call him, the spectral persecution, as a consequence of that crime and his own wanderings. I had been reading in Shelvocke's *Voyages* a day or two before that, while doubling Cape Horn, they frequently saw albatrosses in that latitude, the largest sort of sea-fowl, some extending their wings twelve or thirteen feet 'Suppose,' said I, 'you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that the tutelary spirits of these regions take upon them to avenge the crime.' The incident was thought fit for the purpose and adopted accordingly. I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead men, but do not recollect that I had anything more to do with the scheme of the poem. The gloss with which it was subsequently accompanied was not thought of by either of us at the time, at least not a hint of it was given to me, and I

* Translation of second edition by Mead and Toxton, London, 1736.

have no doubt it was a gratuitous afterthought. We began the composition together on that, to me, memorable evening. I furnished two or three lines at the beginning of the poem, in particular,

“And listen'd like a three year's child:
The Mariner had his will.”

“These trifling contributions, all but one, which Mr. Coleridge has with unnecessary scrupulosity recorded, slipped out of his mind, as well they might. As we endeavored to proceed conjointly (I speak of the same evening), our respective manners proved so widely different that it would have been quite presumptuous in me to do anything but separate from an undertaking upon which I could only have been a clog.”*

For Coleridge's more philosophical account of the genesis of the poem we must turn to the fourteenth chapter of the *Biographia Literaria*:

“During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbors, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of Nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colors of the imagination. The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset, diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of Nature. The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and the agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excel-

* *Memoirs of William Wordsworth*, by Christopher Wordsworth, London, 1851, vol. i, pp. 107, 108; Knight's *Wordsworth*, vol. i, p. 198 f.

lence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being, who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them when they present themselves.

"In this idea originated the plan of the *Lyrical Ballads*, in which it was agreed that my endeavors should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.

"With this view I wrote *The Ancient Mariner*, and was preparing, among other poems, the *Dark Ladie* and the *Christabel*, in which I should have more nearly realized my ideal than I had done in my first attempt. But Mr. Wordsworth's industry had proved so much

more successful and the number of his poems so much greater, that my compositions, instead of forming a balance, appeared rather an interpolation of heterogeneous matter. Mr. Wordsworth added two or three poems, written in his own character, in the impassioned, lofty, and sustained diction which is characteristic of his genius. In this form the *Lyrical Ballads* were published." —*Biographia Literaria*, chapter xiv.

We thus observe the serious aim which stimulated the poet to the production of *The Ancient Mariner*. We do indeed receive the further hint that the immediate stimulus was the desire to earn five pounds, but that fact hardly comes within the scope of a literary inquiry. The external suggestions are very interesting. The dream of Coleridge's friend Cruikshank is responsible for the phantom ship; Wordsworth's suggestion, based upon a passage in Shelvocke's *Voyage*, is responsible for the albatross; and Wordsworth again claims responsibility for the navigation of the ship by dead men. Cruikshank's dream has faded beyond power of recovery, but Shelvocke's *Voyage round the World* is still sufficiently easy of access. The passage describing the coast of Patagonia is as follows: "These (Pintado birds) were accompanied by *Albitrosses*, the largest sort of sea-fowl, some of them extending their wings twelve or thirteen feet." The superstitious fear attaching to the albatross as a bird of ill omen is described in another passage. Cape Horn has been rounded and Captain Shelvocke continues as follows: "One would think it impossible that anything living could subsist in so rigid a climate; and indeed we all observed that we had not had the sight

of one fish of any kind, since we were come to the Southward of the straits of *le Mair*, nor one sea-bird, except a disconsolate black *Albitross*, who accompanied us for several days, hovering about us as if lost himself, till Hatley (my second Captain), observing, in one of his melancholy fits, that the bird was always hovering near us, imagined from its color, that it might be some ill omen. That which, I suppose, induced him the more to encourage his superstition, was the continued series of contrary tempestuous winds which had oppress'd us ever since we had got into this sea. But be that as it would, after some fruitless attempts, at length, he shot the *Albitross*, not doubting (perhaps) that we should have a fair wind after it."*

We may accept Wordsworth's statement that he suggested to Coleridge the navigation of the mariner's ship by dead men. But the idea of revivifying them by a troop of angelic spirits was, according to a writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for October, 1853, borrowed from a tale of shipwreck narrated by Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, in the fourth century. The old sailor of the story was a solitary survivor of a ship's crew. He lived in great peril and agony alone upon the sea for many days; but forthwith the ship was navigated by a "crew of angels," and "steered by the Pilot of the World . . . to the Lucanian shore"; the fishermen there saw a crew, whom they took for soldiers, and fled, but returned again when the old man showed them that he was alone, and towed him into harbor.

Finally, the *Athenæum* for March 15, 1890, contains a review of a book by Mr. Ivor James, *The Source of the Ancient Mariner* (Cardiff: Owen, 1890). The claim is

* *A Voyage round the World*, by Capt. George Shelvocke, Lond., 1726, p. 72 f.

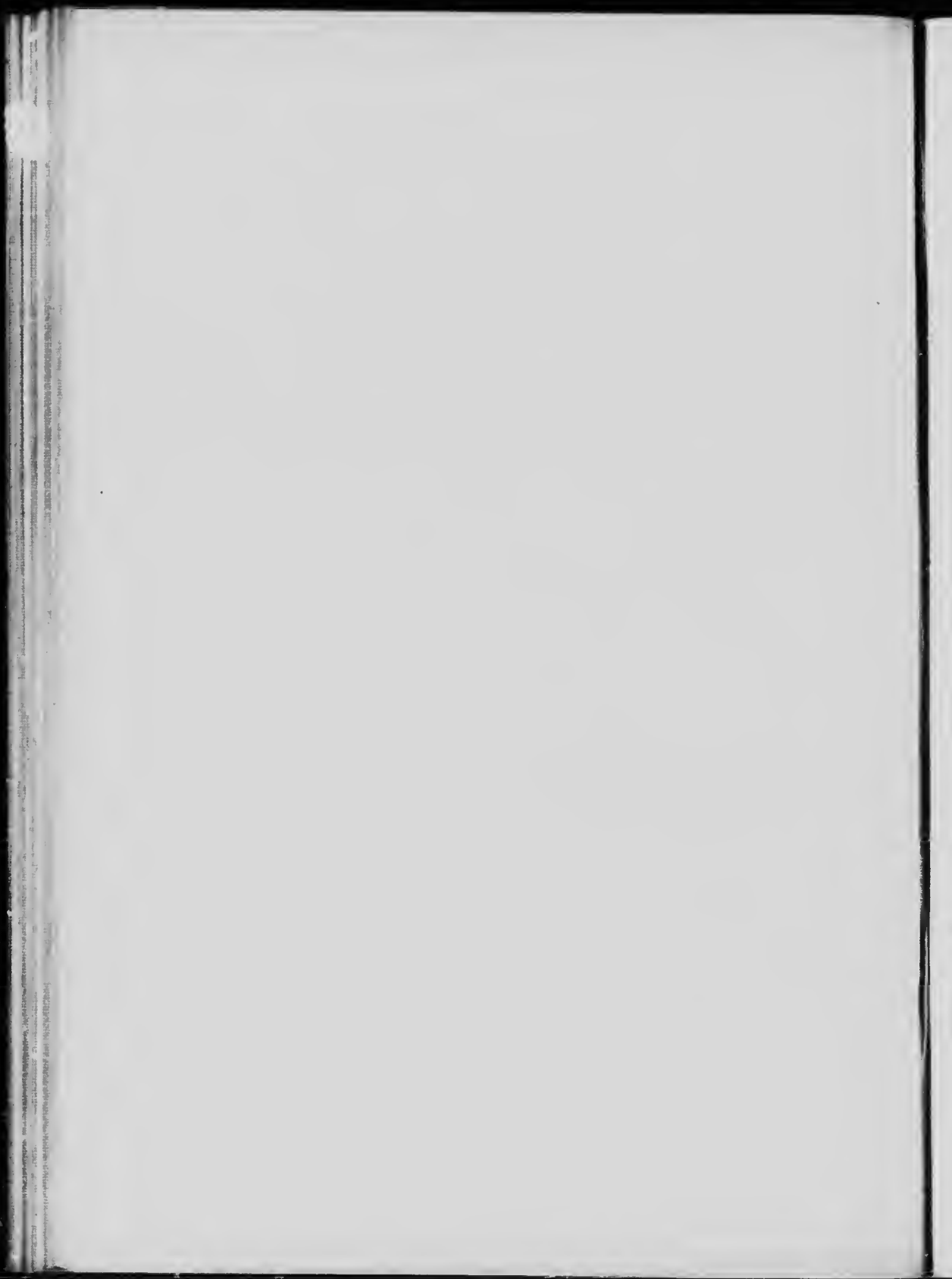
here urged that Coleridge owed a great deal, especially in the nature of description, to an old book by a Captain Thomas James called the *Strange and Dangerous Voyage . . . in his intended Discovery of the Northwest Passage into the South Sea*: London, 1633. Mr. Dykes Campbell considers it probable that Coleridge did, in fact, casually consult this book, and in the notes reference will be made to the possible borrowings, slight though they are. It is curious that this old book contains the idea of being brought home in a dream or trance, but this point Mr James has overlooked. "For mine owne part, I give no credit to them at all; and as little to the vicious, and abusive wits of later *Portingals* and *Spaniards*: who never speak of any difficulties (i. e., in returning from the South Sea): as shoalde water, ice, nor sight of land: but as if they had been brought home in a dreame or engine," p. 107. In this connection, Mr. Dykes Campbell refers to Part VI of *The Ancient Mariner*, and quotes the marginal gloss: "The Mariner hath been cast into a trance: for the angelic power causeth the vessel to drive northward faster than human life could endure."

THE METRE OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

The metrical line employed by Coleridge for this poem is technically known as the "septenarius." The second stanza will serve as a normal example of the type (*a* = accented, *x* = unaccented):

<i>x</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>a</i>	$\left. \begin{array}{l} 4 \text{ accents} \\ 3 \text{ accents} \end{array} \right\} 7 \text{ accents}$
The Bridegroom's doors are open wide,								
<i>x</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>a</i>			$\left. \begin{array}{l} 4 \text{ accents} \\ 3 \text{ accents} \end{array} \right\} 7 \text{ accents}$
And I am next of kin;								
<i>x</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>a</i>	$\left. \begin{array}{l} 4 \text{ accents} \\ 3 \text{ accents} \end{array} \right\} 7 \text{ accents}$
The guests are met, the feast is set:								
<i>x</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>a</i>			$\left. \begin{array}{l} 4 \text{ accents} \\ 3 \text{ accents} \end{array} \right\} 7 \text{ accents}$
May'st hear the merry din.								

The stanza, therefore, really consists of two lines each of seven feet, hence the name. The rime words naturally occur at the seventh foot. In the stanza as here written, the second and fourth lines have a corresponding rime, whereas the first and third never rime with each other, although they may contain internal rimes—e. g., met: set. The departures from the regular type consist in the frequent introduction of unaccented syllables, chiefly in the introductory foot (as in lines 2 and 3 of the first stanza); and in the addition of lines, until the quatrain becomes a quintain, sometimes a sextain, and in one place is expanded to nine lines (ll. 203-211).



THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

Facile credo, plures esse Naturas invisibiles quam visibiles in rerum universitate. Sed horum omnium familiam quis nobis enarrabit, et gradus et cognationes et discrimina et singulorum munera? Quid agunt? quæ loca habitant? Harum rerum notitiam semper ambivit ingenium humanum, nunquam attigit. Juvat, interea, non diffiteor, quandoque in animo, tamquam in tabula, majoris et melioris mundi imaginem contemplari: ne mens assuefacta hodiernæ vitæ minutiis se contrahat nimis, et tota subsidat in pusillas cogitationes. Sed veritati interea invigilandum est, modusque servandus, ut certa ab incertis, diem a nocte, distinguamus.

T. BURNET, *Archæol. Phil.*, p. 68.

ARGUMENT.

How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancyent Marinere came back to his own Country. [1798.]

THE RIME OF
THE ANCIENT MARINER
IN SEVEN PARTS

PART I

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
"By thy long gray beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?"

An ancient
Mariner
meeteth
three Gal-
lants bidden
to a wed-
ding feast,
and detain-
eth one.

The Bridegroom's doors are open wide, 5
And I am next of kin ;
The guests are met, the feast is set :
May'st hear the merry din."

He holds him with his skinny hand,
"There was a ship," quoth he. 10
"Hold off! unhand me, graybeard loon!"
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

1. The abrupt opening is characteristic of ballad poetry.
3. **glittering**. Show the appropriateness of the word. See the final note.

7. Note the internal rime. Point out other examples. Observe the effectiveness of the contrast expressed in the opening stanzas—worldly joy on the one hand, spiritual mystery on the other.

10-12. Note the rich rime, *he : he*.

12. **Eftsoons** = *soon after, forthwith*.

The Wedding-Guest
is spellbound
by the eye of
the old sea-
faring man,
and con-
strained to
hear his tale.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
15 And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
20 The bright-eyed Mariner.

“The ship was cheered, the harbor cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the light-house top.

The Mariner 25
tells how
the ship
sailed south-
ward with
good wind
and fair
weather, till
it reached
the Line.

The sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
30 Till over the mast at noon—”
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

13. **He holds**, etc. The mesmeric spell is complete, and there is no longer need to hold him with his hand, as in line 9.

15, 16. Contributed by Wordsworth.

18. **hear**. Loose rimes as *hear: mariner* are a common license in popular ballads. Point out other examples. Compare lines 38-40 for a repetition of lines 18-20 (another ballad characteristic). See also lines 588-590 for a recurrence to the same idea.

20. **The bright-eyed Mariner**. Epithets and figures are of the simplest and most conventional character in the old ballads. Is *bright-eyed* merely conventional here?

22. **drop**. Here used in the nautical sense—to put out to sea with the ebbing tide.

25 f. See the note to line 25 f., for Lowell's estimate of Coleridge's descriptive powers.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
 Red as a rose is she;
 Nodding their heads before her goes
 The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest
 heareth the
 bridal music;
 but the
 Mariner
 continueth
 his tale.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
 Yet he cannot choose but hear;
 And thus spake on that ancient man,
 The bright-eyed Mariner.

40

"And now the Storm-blast came, and he
 Was tyrannous and strong:
 He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
 And chased us south along.

The ship
 driven by a
 storm to-
 wards the
 south pole.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
 As who pursued with yell and blow
 Still treads the shadow of his foe,
 And forward bends his head,
 The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
 And southward aye we fled.

45

50

And now there came both mist and snow,
 And it grew wondrous cold:
 And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
 As green as emerald.

37. **The Wedding-Guest he beat.** In the ballads, the repetition of the subject was not uncommon; e. g.,

"Our king he kept a false stewarde."

Sir Aldingar, line 1 (Percy's *Reliques*).

45. **With sloping masts.** Analyze the figure in this stanza, and develop its full force.

46. **As who pursued.** Supply the antecedent. Its omission is archaic. Cf.:

"As who should say, 'I am Sir Oracle,'"

Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*, I, i.

52-54. **cold : emerald.** 1798 edition, *could : emerauld*.

The land of
ice, and of
fearful
sounds,
where no
living thing
was to be
seen.

55 And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen :
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
60 The ice was all around :
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound !

Till a great
sea-bird,
called the
Albatross,
came
through the
snow-fog,
and was re-
ceived with
great joy and
hospitality.

At length did come an Albatross :
Thorough the fog it came ;
65 As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit ;
70 The helmsman steered us through !

And lo ! the
Albatross
proveth a
bird of good
omen, and
followeth
the ship as

And a good south wind sprung up behind ;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo !

55. **And through the drifts.** The probable meaning is that the snow-capped icebergs sent a dreary light through the drifting mist and snow, or shed a "dismal sheen" upon the drifting ice-packs.—**the snowy clifts.** *Clifts* is a secondary form of *cliffs*, and probably influenced by *clift*, a secondary form of *cleft*.

56. **sheen.** Derive the word. Cf. line 314 for its use as an adjective

57. **ken** = *to see*. More commonly a noun.

61. Note the onomatopœic effect.

64. **Thorough** = *through*. Cf. *thoroughfare*.

69. **thunder-fit.** A noise resembling thunder.

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
 It perched for vespers nine;
 Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke
 white,
 Glimmered the white moon-shine."

75 it returned
 northward,
 through fog
 and floating
 ice.

"God save thee, ancient Mariner!
 From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
 Why look'st thou so?"—"With my crossbow
 I shot the Albatross.

The ancient
 Mariner
 80 inhospitably
 killeth the
 pious bird of
 good omen.

PART II

The sun now rose upon the right:
 Out of the sea came he,
 Still hid in mist, and on the left
 Went down into the sea.

85

And the good south wind still blew behind,
 But no sweet bird did follow,
 Nor any day, for food or play,
 Came to the mariners' hollo!

90

And I had done a hellish thing,
 And it would work 'em woe:
 For all averred, I had killed the bird
 That made the breeze to blow!

His ship-
 mates cry
 out against
 the ancient
 Mariner, for
 killing the
 bird of good
 luck.

76. **vespers** = *evenings*. Latin *vesper*, evening star, evening.
 Cf.: "Black vesper's pageants."

Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, IV, xiv, 8.

77. **Whiles**. Cf. the adverbial "s" of *eftsoons*, line 12. It is an archaic ballad form.

79. **God save thee**. The dramatic force of the interruption gives added intensity to the confession wrung from the Mariner. What does the story gain by the character of the Wedding-Guest?

83. **The Sun now rose**. The course of the vessel is indicated by the same poetic expedient as above in lines 25 f.

95 Ah, wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!

But when
the fog
cleared off,
they justify
the same,
and thus
make them-
selves ac-
complices in
the crime.

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair
breeze con-
tinues; the
ship enters
the Pacific
Ocean, and
sails north-
ward, even
until it
reaches the
Line.

The ship
hath been
suddenly
becalmed.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
105 We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.
Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
110 The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

115 Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;

97. **head.** State the grammatical relation of this word. Why did the sun previously rise "dim and red"?

98. **uprist**=*uprose*. A Chaucerian form, and usually employed as a substantive.

101. The crew render themselves accomplices in crime.

103 f. Note the alliteration throughout this stanza.

107. **the sails dropt down.** This does not mean that they were lowered, for see lines 311, 312.

111-115. Note the accuracy and minuteness of the observation.

115. **Day after day.** What force does the repetition give to this passage? Cf. lines 119, 121, 125, 143 f., etc.

As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

And the
Albatross
120 begins to be
avenged.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

125

About, about, in reel and rout
The death fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue, and white.

130

And some in dreams assurèd were
Of the spirit that plagued us so:
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

A Spirit had
followed
them: one of
the invisible
inhabitants
of this plan-
et. neither
departed
souls nor

angels; concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.

And every tongue, through utter drought, 135
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!

The Ship-
mates in
140 their sore

120. **And all the boards.** *And* is here equivalent to *and yet*.
Cf.: "Have I a tongue to doom my brother's death,
And shall that tongue give pardon to a slave?"
Shakespeare, *Richard III*, II, i.

133. **fathom.** Parse.

distress
would fain
throw the
whole guilt
on the
ancient
Mariner: in
sign whereof
they hang
the dead sea-
bird round
his neck.

Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

PART III

The ancient
Mariner
beholdeth a
sign in the
element afar
off.

There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
145 A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye,
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

At first it seemed a little speck,
150 And then it seemed a mist:
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
155 As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.

At its nearer
approach, it
seemeth him
to be a ship;
and at a dear
ransom he
freeth his
speech from
the bonds of
thirst.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
160 I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:

152. **wist** = *know*. (Cf. *I throw*.)

155. **dodged**. Comment on the use of the word here. Is it dignified? What, in brief, was Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction?—**water-sprite**. *Sprite* is a doublet of *spirit*.

157. **with black lips baked**. Explain the appropriateness of the labials.

Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

A flash of
joy;
165

See! See! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

And horror
follows.
For can it
be a ship
that comes
onward
170 without
wind or tide?

The western wave was all aflame,
The day was well-nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly 175
Betwixt us and the Sun.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

It seemeth
him but the
skeleton of
a ship.

180

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres?

Are those her ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?

And its ribs
185 are seen as
bars on the
face of the

164. **Gramercy** = French *grand merci*, great thanks. An exclamation expressive of gratitude mingled with surprise.

166. **As they**. Supply the ellipsis.

170. **She steadies**, etc. She sails on an even keel.

179, 180. Develop the force of the simile.

182. **How fast**, etc. The repetition expresses the relentless approach of the phantom ship.

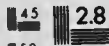
184. **gossameres** = fine-spun cobwebs. Literally = goose-sumner, alluding to the downy appearance of the film, and to the time of its appearance.

185 f. See the note to lines 185 f., for Professor Dowden's comment with reference to the repression of gruesome detail.



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setting Sun.
The Spec-
tre-woman
and her
Death-
mate, and
no other on
board the
skeleton-
ship.

Like vessel,
like crew!

And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a Death? and are there two?
Is Death that woman's mate?

¹⁹⁰ Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

Death and
Life-in-
Death have
diced for the
ship's crew,
and she
(the latter)
winneth the
ancient
Mariner.

¹⁹⁵ The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
'The game is done! I've won! I've won!' ²⁰⁰
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

No twilight
within the
courts of the
Sun.

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

At the rising
of the Moon,

We listened and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
²⁰⁵ My life-blood seemed to sip!
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed
white;
From the sails the dew did drip—
Till clomb above the eastern bar
²¹⁰ The hornèd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

198. and whistles thrice. For the superstitious force of these words, see the note to line 198.

199, 200. The sudden closing in of night within the tropics is magnificently described in two brief lines.

204, 205. Fear at my heart, etc. Discuss the trope.

211. Within the nether tip. What poetic license exists here?

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

One after
another,

215

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

His ship-
mates drop
down dead.

The souls did from their bodies fly—
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my cross-bow!"

220 But Life-in-
Death
begins her
work on
the ancient
Mariner.

PART IV

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

The Wed-
ding-Guest
225 feareth that
a Spirit is
talking to
him;

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand so brown."—

212 **by** = *under*.

213. **Too quick**. This has been explained according to its original meaning of "living," as in the expression "the quick and the dead." Anglo-Saxon *cwīc*. It seems better to take it in its usual sense = *swiftly*, and to supply an ellipsis, such as, "they fell too *quick* for groan or sigh."

217. **Four times fifty**. A poetic periphrasis.

218. **thump: lump**. What is the effect of the rime?

223. **my cross-bow**. The events of the poem did not therefore occur after the sixteenth century. Read carefully the quotation from Walter Pater (note to lines 222, 223), which discusses the supernatural element in *The Ancient Mariner*.

224. **I fear thee**, etc. Compare the Wedding-Guest's interruptions now with those at the outset.

226, 227. Contributed by Wordsworth.

- But the
ancient
Mariner
assureth
him of his
bodily life,
and proceed-
eth to relate
his horrible
penance.
- 230 "Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.
Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
235 My soul in agony.
- He despiseth
the creatures
of the calm.
- The many men so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.
- And envieth
that they
should live
and many
lie dead.
- 240 I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.
I looked to Heaven and tried to pray;
245 But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.
I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;

234. **Never a** = *not one*.

236. **The many men**, etc. His soul is full of reproach that Death should be so ruthless and wanton in his choice of victims, while sparing himself, the chief offender, and the debased creatures of the slime. There is no regeneration possible for the heart which harbors contempt or pride.

244. **I looked to Heaven**, etc. Why could the Mariner not pray? What spiritual significance may be attached to this? Cf. the King's speech in *Hamlet*:

"Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will:
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent."
Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III, iii.

245. **or ever** = *before ever*.

245-247. **gusht: dust**. Imperfect rime.

For the sky and the sea, and the sea and ²⁵⁰
the sky

Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:

The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

But the
curse liveth
for him in
the eye of
the dead
men.

An orphan's curse would drag to Hell
A spirit from on high;

But oh! more horrible than that
Is a curse in a dead man's eye!

Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And no where did abide:

Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—

In his lone-
liness and
fixedness he
yearneth
toward the
journeying
Moon, and
the stars
that still so-

ourn, yet still move onward; and everywhere the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,

254. **reek**. Literally, *smoke*, but here probably *smell*. Cf. German *riechen*, to smell.

261. **Seven days**, etc. Cf. the final note to line 2.

263 f. Do these lines, which attribute a healing power to Nature, correspond with the view expressed in the *Ode to Dejection*, especially stanza iv?

267-281. These lines show a strong romantic feeling for color. Who are the great masters of color in English poetry? What other fine color effects are there in this poem?

270 The charmed water burnt away
A still and awful red.

By the light
of the Moon
he beholdeth
God's crea-
tures of the
great calm.

Beyond the shadow of the ship
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
275 And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
280 They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

Their beauty
and their
happiness.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,

He blest 285
them in his
heart.

And I blessed them unaware!
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The spell
begins to
break.

The selfsame moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
290 The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

PART V

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!

270. **charmed.** Latin *carmen*. Explain the force of the word here in connection with its derivation.

271. **red.** What is the syntactical relation of this word?

282 f. Consult the note to these lines.

290. **The Albatross fell off.** With what may this be compared in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*?

She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven, 295
That slid into my soul.

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew ;
And when I awoke, it rained.

By grace of
the holy
Mother, the
ancient
Mariner is
refreshed
300 with rain.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank ;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs : 305
I was so light--almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind :
It did not come anear ;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

He heareth
sounds,
310 and seeth
strange
sights and
commotions
in the sky
and the
element.

The upper air burst into life !
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about ! 315
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

297. **silly**=*blessed*. Shortened from early modern English *seely*, German *selig*.

300. **And when**, etc. Observe the metrical movement of this line.

303. **drunken**. Archaic as participle.

309 f. These strange commotions in Nature portend the re-animation of the lifeless bodies.

314. **fire-flags**. Poetical and archaic for *lightning*.—**sheen**. See line 56, note.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
 And the sails did sigh like sedge;
 320 And the rain poured down from one black
 cloud;

The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
 The Moon was at its side:
 Like waters shot from some high fall,
 325 The lightning fell with never a j
 A river steep and wide.

The bodies
 of the ship's
 crew are in-
 spired and
 the ship
 moves on.

The loud wind never reached the ship,
 Yet now the ship moved on!
 Beneath the lightning and the Moon
 330 The dead men gave a groan.

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
 Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
 It had been strange, even in a dream,
 To have seen those dead men rise.

335 The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
 Yet never a breeze up blew;
 The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
 Where they were wont to do;
 They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
 340 We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
 Stood by me knee to knee:

318-326. See Rev. Stopford Brooke's comment in the final note.

321. **The Moon**, etc. Note the effective contrast.

322. **The thick**, etc. Comment on the verbal harmony of this line.

324-326. Discuss these lines as to meaning and form.

339-344. Note the intensity of the realism.

The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me."—

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!"

"Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!

'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corpses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest:

For when it dawned—they dropped their ³⁵⁰
arms,

And clustered round the mast;

Sweet sounds rose slowly through their
mouths,

And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,

Then darted to the Sun;

Slowly the sounds came back again,

Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky

I heard the sky-lark sing;

Sometimes all little birds that are,

How they seemed to fill the sea and air

With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,

Now like a lonely flute;

And now it is an angel's song,

That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased; yet still the sails made on

A pleasant noise till noon,

345 But not by
the souls of
the men, nor
by daemons
of earth or
middle air,
but by a
blessed
troop of an-
gelic spirits,
sent down
by the in-
vocation of
the guard-
ian saint.

355

360

365

362. *jargoning*. Old French *jargon*, the singing of birds.

367-372. These lines, with their gentle melody, reveal Coleridge's power over the musical resources of our language. The words themselves have the murmuring flow of a hidden

A noise like of a hidden brook
 370 In the leafy month of June,
 That to the sleeping woods all night
 Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
 Yet never a breeze did breathe :
 375 Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
 Moved onward from beneath.

The lone-
 some spirit
 from the
 south pole
 carries on
 the ship as
 far as the
 Line, in
 obedience to
 the angelic
 troop, but
 still requireth
 vengeance.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
 From the land of mist and snow,
 The spirit slid : and it was he
 380 That made the ship to go.
 The sails at noon left off their tune,
 And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
 Had fixed her to the ocean :
 385 But in a minute she 'gan stir,
 With a short uneasy motion—
 Backwards and forwards half her length
 With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go,
 390 She made a sudden bound ;
 It flung the blood into my head,
 And I fell down in a swoond.

The Polar
 Spirit's fel-
 low-daemons,
 the invisible
 inhabitants

How long in that same fit I lay,
 I have not to declare ;
 395 But ere my living life returned,

brook. The peacefulness and continuity of the ship's motion could not be more felicitously described.

382. See the final note.

394. **I have not**, etc. = I have not power to.

395. **living life**. In contrast with his former **Life in Death**.

I heard and in my soul discerned
Two voices in the air.

'Is it he?' quoth one, 'Is this the man?
By him who died on cross,
With his cruel blow he laid full low,
The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.'

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, 'The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do.'

of the ele-
ment, take
part in his
wrong: and
two of them
relate, one
to the
other, that
penance
400 long and
heavy for
the ancient
Mariner
hath been
accorded
to the Polar
Spirit, who
returneth
southward.

405

PART VI

FIRST VOICE

'But tell me, tell me! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the Ocean doing?'

410

SECOND VOICE

'Still as a slave before his lord,
The Ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

415

397. **Two voices.** These voices probably represent Justice and Mercy. Justify this statement.

407. **honey-dew.** Drops of sugary substance found on the leaves and stems of plants.

If he may know which way to go;
 For she guides him smooth or grim.
 420 See, brother, see! how graciously
 She looketh down on him.'

FIRST VOICE

The Mariner
 hath been
 cast into a
 trance; for
 the angelic
 power caus-
 eth the ves-
 sel to drive
 northward
 faster than
 human life 425
 could en-
 dure.

'But why drives on that ship so fast,
 Without or wave or wind?'

SECOND VOICE

The Super- 430
 natural
 motion is
 retarded;
 the Mariner
 awakes, and
 his penance
 begins anew.

'The air is cut away before,
 And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
 Or we shall be belated:
 For slow and slow that ship will go,
 When the Mariner's trance is abated.'

The Super- 430
 natural
 motion is
 retarded;
 the Mariner
 awakes, and
 his penance
 begins anew.

I woke, and we were sailing on
 As in a gentle weather:
 'Twas night, calm night, the Moon was high,
 The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,
 435 For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
 All fixed on me their stony eyes,
 That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
 Had never passed away:
 440 I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
 Nor turn them up to pray.

The curse
 is finally
 expiated.

And now this spell was snapt: once more
 I viewed the ocean green,

418. Supply the ellipsis.

426 f. See the final note.

And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

445

Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

450

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

455

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

460

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The light-house top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?

And the
ancient
465. Mariner
beholdeth
his native
country.

452. **But soon**, etc. Compare this with the wind described in lines 309 f.

457. **Like a meadow-gale of spring**. A sea-image redolent of the land and memories of home. See the final note on lines 318 f.

458. **It mingled strangely**, etc. The Mariner is not quite sure whether to dread this wind or not. He remembers his former experience.

464 f. Compare lines 21 f. The evolution of the poem is completed. See the note to lines 464 f.

We drifted o'er the harbor-bar,
 And I with sobs did pray—
 470 O let me be awake, my God !
 Or let me sleep alway.

The harbor-bay was clear as glass,
 So smoothly it was strewn !
 And on the bay the moonlight lay,
 475 And the shadow of the Moon.

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
 That stands above the rock :
 The moonlight steeped in silentness
 The steady weathercock.

480 And the bay was white with silent light,
 Till rising from the same,
 Full many shapes, that shadows were,
 In crimson colors came.

The angelic
 spirits leave
 the dead
 bodies,

And appear
 in their own
 forms of
 light.

A little distance from the prow
 485 Those crimson shadows were :
 I turned my eyes upon the deck—
 Oh, Christ ! what saw I there !

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
 And, by the holy rood !
 490 A man all light, a seraph-man,
 On every corse there stood.

478. **steeped in silentness.** The peacefulness of this scene, in marked contrast with the unrest which had gone before, is reiterated in the next line of this stanza, and in the stanza which follows, e.g., line 479, **The steady weathercock**, and line 480, **with silent light**.

482, 483.

**that shadows were
 In crimson colors.**

Note the forcible antithesis. Point out other examples of verbal antithesis in *The Ancient Mariner*, and of color contrasts in general.

489. **And, by the holy rood !** A ballad oath. **rood** = *cross*.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand :

It was a heavenly sight !

They stood as signals to the land,

Each one a lovely light ; 495

This seraph-band, each waved his hand ;

No voice did they impart—

No voice ; but oh ! the silence sank

Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars, 500

I heard the Pilot's cheer ;

My head was turned perforce away,

And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,

I heard them coming fast : 505

Dear Lord in Heaven ! it was a joy

The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third—I heard his voice :

It is the Hermit good !

He singeth loud his godly hymns 510

That he makes in the wood.

He'll shrive my soul, he'll wash away

The Albatross's blood.

PART VII

This Hermit good lives in that wood

Which slopes down to the sea.

The Hermit
of the
515 Wood.

502. **My head**, etc. The angelic power constrained him.

512. **shrieve**. An obsolete form of *shrive*.

Part VII. Read the note carefully on pages and .

514. **This Hermit good**. It is especially appropriate that the Mariner's sin should be absolved by one enveloped in such sanctity. The student should indicate by reference to the text the character which Coleridge intended to bestow upon the Hermit.

How loudly his sweet voice he rears !
 He loves to talk with marineres
 That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
 520 He hath a cushion plump :
 It is the moss that wholly hides
 The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat neared : I heard them talk,
 ' Why this is strange, I trow !
 525 Where are those lights so many and fair,
 That signal made but now ? '

Approacheth
 the ship with
 wonder.

' Strange, by my faith ! ' the Hermit said—
 ' And they answered not our cheer !
 The planks look warped ! and see those sails
 530 How thin they are and sere !
 I never saw aught like to them,
 Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
 My forest brook along ;
 535 When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
 And the owlet whoops to the wolf below
 That eats the she-wolf's young. '

519-522. Develop the ironical force of this stanza.

525. **Where are**, etc. Cf. lines 494, 495.

530. **How thin**, etc. Cf. line 312.

532. Observe the *enjambement* or run-on line from one stanza to the next.

533. **Brown skeletons**, etc. Show how this simile is especially natural here. How do lines 535-537 affect the simile ?

535. **Ivy-tod**. A thick bush, usually of ivy.

537. **That eats**. What is the antecedent of "that" ?

' Dear Lord ! it hath a fiendish look—
(The Pilot made reply)

I am a-feared'—' Push on, push on ! ' 540
Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred ;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard. 545

Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread :
It reached the ship, it split the bay ;
The ship went down like lead. 550

The ship
suddenly
sinketh.

Stunned by the loud and dreadful sound, 550
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat ;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat. 555

The ancient
Mariner is
saved in the
Pilot's boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round ;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked 560
And fell down in a fit ;

540. **a-feared.** Distinguish carefully by derivations *a-feared* and *afraid*.

549. **The ship went down like lead.** This line is a striking example at once of the simplicity and economy of Coleridge's diction. A reference to the introduction will show that the original vice of his style was turgidity and diffuseness. Was Coleridge justified in thus getting rid of his ship?

558, 559. **And all was still, etc.** This is a Wordsworthian touch. Examine the passages in this poem which describe sound. Do they argue delicacy of perception?

The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars : the Pilot's boy,
565 Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
'Ha, ha !' quoth he, 'full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row.'

570 And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land !
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

The ancient
Mariner
earnestly
entreateth
the Hermit
to shrieve
him ; and the
penance of
life falls on
him.

'O, shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man !'
575 The Hermit crossed his brow.
'Say quick,' quoth he, 'I bid thee say—
What manner of 'nan art thou ?'

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woful agony,
580 Which forced me to begin my tale ;
And then it left me free.

And ever
and anon
throughout
his future
life an agony
constraineth
him to travel
from land to
land.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns ;
And till my ghastly tale is told,
585 This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land ;
I have strange power of speech ;

564-567. **I took the oars**, etc. We have here one of the many inimitable touches in the poem. The quiet unobtrusive line, which tells of the Pilot's boy "who now doth crazy go," reveals with startling force the terrifying aspect of the Mariner.

586. Discuss the simile.

That moment that his face I see,
 I know the man that must hear me :
 To him my tale I teach.

590

What loud uproar bursts from that door !
 The Wedding-Guests are there :
 But in the garden-bower the bride
 And bride-maids singing are :
 And hark the little vesper bell,
 Which biddeth me to prayer !

595

O Wedding-Guest ! this soul hath been
 Alone on a wide wide sea :
 So lonely 'twas, that God himself
 Scarce seemèd there to be.

600

O, sweeter than the marriage-feast,
 'Tis sweeter far to me,
 To walk together to the kirk
 With a goodly company !—

To walk together to the kirk,
 And all together pray,
 While each to his great Father bends,

605

591. **What loud uproar**, etc. Walter Pater observed that the unity of *The Ancient Mariner* was "secured in part by the skill with which the incidents of the marriage feast are made to break in dreamily from time to time upon the main story." Can you assign any further significance to the recurrence of these sounds of marriage festival?

595, 596. **And hark**, etc. What do these lines indicate with reference to *The Ancient Mariner*?

597-600. **O Wedding Guest!** etc. Develop the significance of these lines.

601-617. **O sweeter**, etc. On the basis of these lines, and by reference to the poem as a whole, comment upon the *human* character of the ancient Mariner himself. Keep in mind Wordsworth's opinion as quoted on pages 59 and 60, to the effect that the Mariner possesses no definite character, whether in his human or nautical capacity.

Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay!

And to
teach by his
own example
love and reverence
to all
things that
God made
and loveth.

610 Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
615 All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

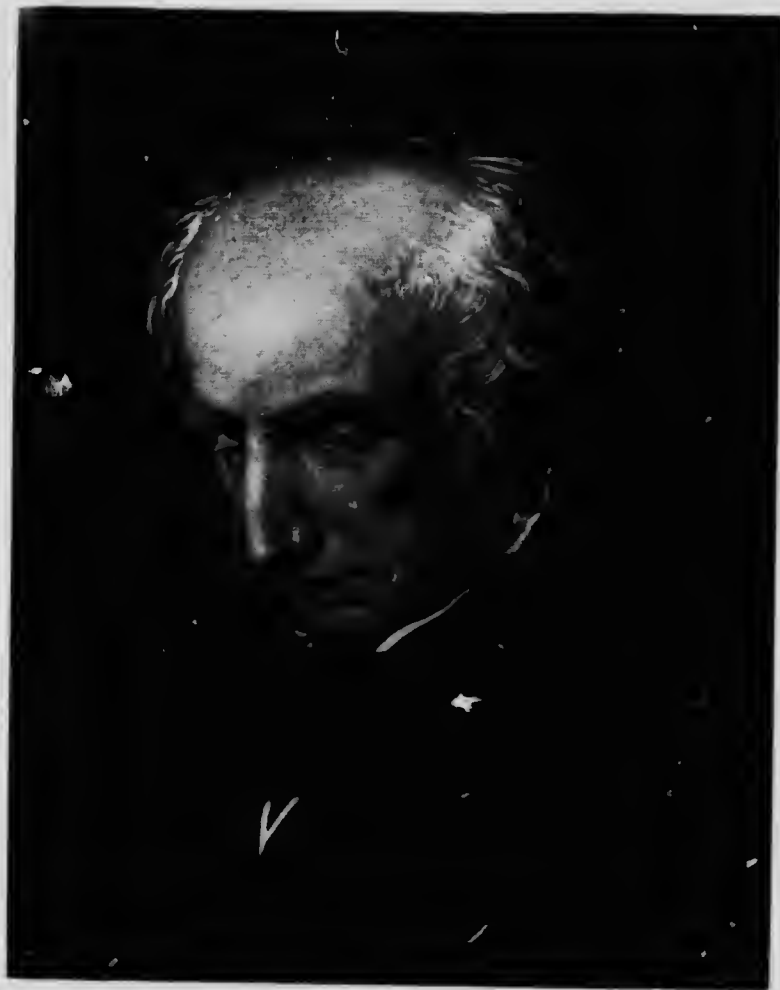
The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
620 Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man,
625 He rose the morrow morn.

1797-1798

623. **forlorn.** *Deprived.* Archaic in this sense.

624. **sadder.** What is the force of this word here?



WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

LIFE AND WRITINGS OF WORDSWORTH

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, born at Cockermouth, Cumberland,
April 7, 1770; died at his home, Rydal Mount, Grasmere,
April 23, 1850.

Ah! since dark days still bring to light
Man's prudence and man's fiery might,
Time may restore us in his course
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force;
But where will Europe's latter hour
Again find Wordsworth's healing power?
Others will teach us how to dare,
And against fear our breast to steel;
Others will strengthen us to bear—
But who, ah! who will make us feel?
The cloud of mortal destiny,
Others will front it fearlessly—
But who, like him, will put it by?

—*Matthew Arnold.*

The peace which Wordsworth's poetry confers upon those who read him with sympathy and insight, its "healing power" as Arnold rightly names it, does not proceed from a nature too self-centred to realize the presence of misery in the world, and complacently satisfied with its own selfish joy. We are over prone perhaps to consider optimism as the result of limited insight or defective sympathies, or, at the best, as the outcome of circumstances which have never known the shock of sorrow. Thus, Wordsworth's undeviating spirit of optimism has been ascribed now to the fact that fortune

had always smiled upon him, or again to the narrow range of his intellectual sympathies, which confined him within the limits of a petty parish among the hills, into whose recesses the turbid flow of the world's currents could not penetrate. Especially has he been fiercely assailed by the partisans of progress as a recalcitrant from the cause of liberty which he had momentarily espoused in his youth. Shelley, a devout admirer of his poetry, stigmatized him as a slave, and Browning mourned him as a "Lost Leader."

In the brief sketch which follows, the facts are so presented as to account for the evident change in Wordsworth's opinions, which led his mind from chaos to stability and his nature from turbulence to repose.

Narrow and reactionary, in a sense, he certainly became, and his narrowness grew intensified with years. Yet the greatness of his poetry does not rest upon his conservative theories of church and state. It was his privilege to reveal to the world the native dignity of humanity even in the humblest guise, and the beauty and the healing power of nature in the mere fragrance of a flower or in the majesty of the folded hills. The spirit of joy which penetrates his poetry is so buoyant, not because the mood which gave it birth was shallow, but because it brought,

Authentic tidings of invisible things;
Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;
And central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation.

—*Excursion IV.*

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH was born on the 7th of April, 1770, at Cockermouth, Cumberland, on the verge of that lake country with which his name will always be associated. He was the second son of five children

born to John Wordsworth and Anne Wordsworth, the daughter of William Cookson, a mercer of Penrith. His mother died of consumption when the poet was eight years old, and his father died five years later, leaving no property save an unpaid claim upon the estate of the Earl of Lonsdale, whose agent for many years he had been.

While his mother lived, William Wordsworth had been sent with small profit to schools at Cockermouth and Penrith. Upon her death, in 1778, his father sent him and his elder brother to the Grammar school at Hawkshead, where he remained, boarding with a village dame, in thorough contentment until 1787, little hampered by discipline, satisfying his lively delight in reading as his fancy prompted him—old-world fables, Arabian Nights, Don Quixote, Fielding, and Swift, and roaming at will through the beautiful country-side, enjoying nature with all the zest of a healthy boy.

Such unreflecting joy in nature was not, however, untempered by feelings akin to awe such as are recorded in the memorable passage of "The Prelude," when he was rowing down the silent lake, a grim peak, black and huge, towered up between him and the stars, and strode after him "with measured motion like a living thing."

And often, even to his boyish vision, the external world seemed to fade, and substantial things lost the semblance of reality. "I was often unable," he says, "to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree

Hawkshead
Grammar
School.
1778-1787.

Early feel-
ing for
mystery in
Nature.

to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality."

His masters were sympathetic and free from pedantry, if we may trust the idealized portrait which Wordsworth has left us of his favorite teacher, William Taylor, the Matthew of the poems. They never interfered with the healthy native impulses of boyhood, and few poets can look back upon a youth where the qualities of mind and body have had such freedom to expand. Coleridge was growing pale in the unhealthy cloisters of Christ's Hospital, while Wordsworth was roaming the Esthwaite hills, moulded less by the lore of books than by the delicate influences of the woods and skies.

In the poetic record of his own life these at least are the influences which he recalls with positive rapture :

Ye Presences of Nature in the sky
And on the earth ! Ye Visions of the hills !
And Souls of lonely places* can I think
A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
Such ministry, when ye through many a year
Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
Impressed upon all forms the characters
Of danger or desire, and thus did make
The surface of the universal earth
With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,
Work like a sea? *

In estimating the influences which moulded Wordsworth's youth, we must accord to that of nature the first importance; yet the democratic spirit of rustic life, the humble, though noble, characters of the shepherds and dalesmen of the north country among whom he lived, were not without their effect, and could not

* *The Prelude*, l. 464 f.

fail to stamp his mind with the ideals of sincerity and simplicity that dominate his poetry upon the human side.

Wordsworth's father had left his young family under the guardianship of two uncles, who managed when the time arrived to gather enough money to send William and his younger brother to the University of Cambridge.

St. John's
College.
Cambridge.
1787-1791. In October, therefore, of the year 1787, Wordsworth was duly enrolled as a student of St. John's College. Like most Freshmen

he entered residence with romantic visions of the future, but soon the feeling came over him that he "was not for that hour, nor for that place." After the untrammelled freedom of his boyhood the comparative restrictions of the university fretted his spirit, nor could he accommodate his mind to the narrow courses of study then prescribed. Intellectual life at Cambridge was stagnant, and for mathematics and theology which still commanded their zealous votaries, Wordsworth could simulate no enthusiasm. To the mortification of his guardians he systematically neglected his studies, and devoted such time as he gave to books to the modern languages, then as now despised in those conservative abodes of learning.

But his vacations brought a renewal of his old enthusiasms, and to a sunrise beheld at Hawkshead, during the first summer of his return, he ascribes the definite awakening of his poetic spirit :

Magnificent

The morning rose, in memorable pomp,
Glorious as e'er I had beheld—in front,
The sea lay laughing at a distance; near,
The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,
Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;
And in the meadows and the lower grounds

Was all the sweetness of a common dawn—
 Dews, vapors, and the melody of birds,
 And laborers going forth to till the fields.
 Ah! need I say, dear Friend! that to the brim
 My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
 Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
 Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
 A dedicated Spirit. On I walked
 In thankful blessedness, which yet survives.*

Wordsworth spent his second long vacation in Derbyshire and Yorkshire, and in wandering about the Lake Country with his sister Dorothy and his old school companion and future wife, Mary Hutchinson. During the summer of 1790 he made a foreign tour with his friend, Robert Jones. With about £20 apiece, and all their belongings knotted in a handkerchief, they went on foot through northern France, then in the early ferment of the Revolution, into Switzerland and the Italian mountain lakes, and homeward by the Rhine.

This journey was to bear fruit in his future poetry, but the immediate result of this systematic neglect of **Takes his** his studies was an undistinguished degree **Degree, 1791.** without honors in January, 1791.

Then followed a long period of hopeless irresolution. He passed three months in London, where he records that the moving scenes of the great city quickened at least his human sympathies. But his outlook was gloomy. He had offended his guardians by his want of assiduity, and he now alienated them completely by his apparent infirmity of purpose, and his seeming unconcern for the future. He spent the summer with his friend Jones in Wales, and in the late autumn he again set foot in France.

* *The Prelude*, IV, 323 f.

From Paris he passed on to Orleans, and thence in the early spring of 1792 to the town of Blois. He had hitherto been an astonished but unsympathetic spectator of the momentous drama of the Revolution. But now he, too, caught the blaze, and kindled with enthusiasm for what he judged a sacred cause. This change had been wrought in him by his growing friendship with Michel Beaupuy, a captain in the little garrison at Blois, and an ardent and noble-minded republican. The September massacres in Paris did not suffice to disillusion him, and he seriously contemplated throwing in his lot with the Girondist party.

A dearth of funds quite possibly saved his neck from the guillotine, for in December he was forced to forego his political dreams and return to his own country.

With our preconceived ideas of Wordsworth's reverence for order and established custom it is well nigh impossible for us to realize the vehemence of his republican sympathies at this time.

Soon after his return to England he found occasion to give expression to his advanced opinions. The country was divided between the discreet views of Edmund Burke, who relished the measured domination of the past, and the incendiary theories of Paine and Godwin, who represented in England the most extreme tendencies in French thought, and desired a root and branch destruction of existing evils. For these thinkers the past was nothing less than a mighty blunder, and all modern institutions inherited from the past were founded on error. They advocated the abolition therefore of all government, and Godwin went so far as to urge the dissolution of the human ties of friendship, gratitude, and love as consecrated by the

marriage bond. In their stead individual liberty would flourish, and reason (what they meant by the term is scarcely clear), would reign supreme.

The early views of Wordsworth are tinged by these doctrines, and are plainly expressed in a letter which he addressed to Richard Watson, the Bishop of Llandaff, in January, 1793. Never an advocate of violence he still could reconcile himself to the Reign of Terror, and to the execution of Louis XVI as a measure of indisputable justice.

The outbreak of war between Great Britain and France, in February, 1793, cast him into great mental distress. His philosophy and his patriotism were in conflict, and British reverses caused him exultant triumph.

At this painful period of his life he was absorbed wholly by political thought and had sadly lapsed from his earlier innocent delight in nature. During the year 1793, with little enthusiasm and, as it were, inapology for his idleness, he prepared some of his early poems for publication—the *Evening Walk*, and the *Descriptive Sketches*. Coleridge declared that "seldom, if ever, was the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced." To the student of Wordsworth these poems are now chiefly of interest as showing the distance that his mind was able to traverse in a brief space from obscurity and artificiality to the clearness and naked simplicity of the "Lyrical Ballads."

The sky was soon to clear for Wordsworth. The summer of 1793 he passed in the Isle of Wight with William Calvert. Early in 1794 he caught more than a fleeting glimpse of his sister Dorothy who had been jealously kept apart from him owing to their guard-

ian's mistrust of his radical opinions. Wordsworth still firmly persisted in his refusal to enter one of the liberal professions, but later in this same year a timely legacy released his mind from care, and made possible for him the only career in which he might confidently look for success and contentment. Raisley Calvert, the

**The Calvert
bequest.**

brother of his friend William, dying of consumption in 1794, left the young poet a bequest of £900, "from a confidence on his part," as Wordsworth writes, "that I had power and attainments which might be of use to mankind."

With this modest sum, and little besides, he supported his sister and himself for the next seven or eight years. In 1795 he became tutor to the son of Basil Montagu for the sum of £50 a year. Also through the

**Racedown,
1795.**

good offices of Montagu he secured in the autumn of the same year, a farmhouse with orchard and garden, rent free, at Racedown in the southern part of Dorsetshire.

Though his financial resources, slender indeed as they were, had now become less restricted, and the possibility of a poetic career seemed assured, it must not be supposed that his harmony of mind was at once restored. Indeed at Racedown he may be said to have reached the crisis of his mental distress, when disillusionment had begun to fall upon his ideals, and a new philosophy had not yet dawned for him.

But the conditions were favorable for a restoration of his peace of mind. His dearly loved sister was his companion, and as his old dreams fell into worthless dust, she led him back to nature for consolation:

**Dorothy
Wordsworth.**

She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,
And humble cares, and delicate fears;

A heart the fountain of sweet tears;
And love, and thought and joy.*

Inevitably, we imagine, Wordsworth would have been led of himself to revive his early love for nature, but the influence of his sister at this critical time can scarcely be over-estimated. She herself possessed the poet's eye, and almost the poet's faculty of expression, for Wordsworth seems to have caught some of his most felicitous phrases from her lips.† Her sympathy also for the simple manners of rustic life was sincere, and it was her powerful inducement which stimulated her brother in the choice of his poetic themes.

But for the present, the revolutionary leaven was still fermenting within him. In 1796, Coleridge, who had met him shortly before, describes him as "a republican, and at least a semi-atheist."

The poems upon which he spent his time in 1795-6 reveal how deeply he had imbibed the theories of the Revolution. These were: *Satires*, inveighing against the evils of society; *Guilt and Sorrow*, a sombre poem of human suffering; and more particularly deserving mention, *The Borderers*, his sole dramatic effort. In this ill-constructed and undramatic play, which Coleridge in his early enthusiasm ranked with Shakespeare's, Wordsworth finally purged his mind of the theories he had once revered. As Goethe exposed in "The Sorrows of Werther" the fatal results of unrestricted sentimentality, and thus freed himself from the clutches of that disease, so Wordsworth, in "The Borderers," showed the disintegrating power of moral casuistry, masquerading in the guise of reason. Defective though the play

*The Sparrow's Nest.

†Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal contains the germ, and touches even of the phraseology of many of the poet's early lyrics.

may be, it is still of capital importance as showing the progressive evolution of Wordsworth's opinions.

The final shock which definitively alienated the poet's sympathies from revolutionary France, was to come in 1798, when the Republican armies invaded Switzerland, the ancient inviolate home of liberty.

Wordsworth and Coleridge had first met towards the close of 1795, and by 1797 their intimacy had ripened into a close friendship. Coleridge was living in 1797 at Nether Stowey, and in June paid the Wordsworths a visit at Racedown. In July, they visited him at Stowey, and while there they rented a house at Alfoxden, three miles away, their principal inducement, of course, being Coleridge's society. "We are three people," said Coleridge, "but only one soul," and Miss Wordsworth's Journal amply confirms the statement.

Wordsworth
and
Coleridge.

The Words-
worths at
Alfoxden.

The critical importance of this period in Wordsworth's development has already been shown. His effort had been to recover joy from the heart of despair, and to free himself from the exclusive domination of the reasoning faculty. The habit of analysis had vitiated his mind, and well nigh paralyzed his emotional nature. A partial recovery he had indeed found in his renewed delight in nature, and now his intimacy with Coleridge was to afford him the path of escape from the bondage of reason.

This escape Coleridge had already found in the mystic philosophies of Boehme, Swedenborg, and Spinoza, and in the writings of the great modern thinkers of Germany. "They contributed," writes Coleridge, "to keep alive the heart in the head; gave me an indistinct, yet stirring and working presentiment, *that all the pro-*

ducts of the mere reflective faculty partook of death, and were as the rattling twigs and sprays in winter, into which a sap was yet to be propelled, from some root to which I had not penetrated, if they were to afford my soul either food or shelter."

These unfamiliar ideas asserting the supremacy of imagination and the emotions, and poured forth with the irresistible eloquence of his friend, were like manna in the desert to Wordsworth. He had found the resting place his thoughts had so long sought in vain; and urged onward by Coleridge's unfeigned admiration for his powers, and his growing confidence in himself, he entered upon a season of unexampled poetic activity. His genius had been slow to put forth blossom, but now the harvest was bounteous.

Wordsworth's removal to Alfoxden in 1797 marks the turning point in his career. His faith in the specious humanitarian ideals of the revolutionary writers had yielded to saner views of life and human destiny. The region was beautiful enough to satisfy his renewed delight in the charms of nature. "There is everything here," Miss Wordsworth wrote in her first enthusiasm, "sea, woods wild as fancy ever painted, brooks clear and pebbly as in Cumberland, villages so romantic; and William and I, in a wander by ourselves, found out a sequestered waterfall in a dell formed by steep hills covered with full-grown timber trees. The woods are as fine as those at Lowther, and the country more romantic; it has the character of the less grand parts of the neighborhood of the lakes." And finally, the stimulating society of Coleridge and an intellectual group of friends saved him from the narrowness of mind which his natural love of solitude would have surely engendered.

"The stream of his poetry, hitherto slender and intermittent, now began to gush forth in an abundant tide. *The Recluse*, his great philosophical work, was projected and commenced just at the time when Coleridge was composing his indignant ode to France.

Lyrical Ballads. Almost all the Lyrical Ballads were written during the spring and summer of 1798, a spring of exceptional beauty in spite of its backwardness, a summer so marvellous that *The Prelude* looks back towards it as the brightest and sunniest the author had known since his boyhood. The loss of his last illusion concerning the Revolution, instead of destroying the joyousness of his spirit, taught him that in himself and in his comprehension of nature, he possessed an inexhaustible well-spring of happiness, against which no external disappointment could prevail. Henceforth he was conscious of his own power to resist depression, and of the vitality of his own joyous spirit.

Still a convalescent when he arrived, Wordsworth left Alfoxden cured. When he came, he was engaged in putting the finishing touches to *Guilt and Sorrow*, *The Borderers*, and *The Ruined Cottage*. On his departure, a year later, after addressing to Nature his first hymn of thanksgiving, written near Tintern Abbey, he carried away with him in manuscript about a thousand lines of his great consolatory poem, *The Recluse*. His self-identity, destroyed for a time by a crisis of despair, was restored. The link which was to connect his early years with those of his maturity was happiness; happiness formerly spontaneous, but now the result of conscious reflection; at first mere lightness of heart, but a settled optimism at last. The years of doubt and gloom had fled, leaving behind them merely a fruitful impression, a salutary warning. Those which preceded them, on the other hand, the years of his childhood and early youth, drew near again, until for him they became the present. He recognized that in them, unknown to himself, he had lived the true life; and if for a moment he had gone astray, he would now attempt to ascertain the direction of his first innocent footsteps, in order that he might set his feet once more upon the path which they had followed."*

The remaining years of Wordsworth's life were placid and uneventful. There are no new developments in

* Émile Legouis. *The Early Life of Wordsworth*.

his opinions to be recorded, save perhaps a deepening of his sympathies towards ecclesiastical and political authority, and an intensification of his prejudices against all that savored of innovation in the state, and against the increasing utilitarianism of the age.

His most brilliant productive period lay within the decade from 1797 to 1807. His share in the conception of the *Ancient Mariner* has already been pointed out;* and as the poems of the two friends continued to multiply beneath the stimulus of their intercourse the plan of a joint volume was discussed. Thus arose the famous "Lyrical Ballads," in which, as has also been shown,† Wordsworth was to reveal the poetry that lay beneath the surface of familiar things, while Coleridge was to transfer human interests into the realm of the supernatural.

The Lyrical Ballads appeared in September, 1798, and in 1800 a second edition was issued with a celebrated preface, in which Wordsworth propounded his famous theory of poetic diction, contending that the language of poetry should be identical with that of "real life," and that "there neither is nor can be any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition." The fallacy of this theory, in its extreme application at least, was pointed out in Coleridge's remarkable criticism of Wordsworth's poetry and poetic theories in the *Biographia Literaria* (1817). Indeed, Wordsworth rarely binds himself by his own theory, and then only in passages whose bathos permitted the poet's critics to stigmatize his verse as childish and nonsensical. The majestic diction of the "Tintern Abbey," which he pro-

**Lyrical
Ballads,
September,
1798.**

* See page 63.

† See page 64.

duced at this period, must surely be measured by another test!

In September, 1798, on the eve of the first appearance of the *Lyrical Ballads*, the Wordsworths, in company with Coleridge, set sail from Yarmouth for Germany. Coleridge parted from them almost immediately, and Wordsworth and his sister proceeded to Goslar. Here, amid much discomfort, and in the uninspiring snow and slush of a German winter, Wordsworth produced many of his finest poems—*Nutting*, portions of *The Prelude*, and the exquisite series of verses to Lucy. Wordsworth's stay in Germany, unlike Coleridge's more significant visit, was absolutely unproductive of result upon his development.

Early in 1799, he returned to England. In October he made a tour of the English lakes with Coleridge and his brother John. On the 20th December, 1799, he made his home at Dove Cottage, Town End, Grasmere, where he remained until his growing family compelled him in 1808 to change his abode.

In 1802, the death of Lord Lonsdale freed him for the rest of his life from financial embarrassment. The heir to the title and estates nobly recognized and acquitted the debt which now with interest had accumulated to £8,500. Of this, Wordsworth and his sister received their proportionate share, amounting to £1,800 each. His brighter outlook enabled Wordsworth, in October, to marry Mary Hutchinson, his long valued friend.

This same year is memorable in his poetic history as marking the commencement of his sonnets, which now form a series as noble as the English language

German
visit. 1798-
1799.

Dove
Cottage.
1799-1808.

Marries
Mary
Hutchinson,
October,
1802.

contains. The first stimulus to the choice of this form came from Milton, whose majestic tone he has sought, and not without success, to reproduce. But the immediate inspiration to his political poems was the crisis in his country's history, which, moving to its depths his newly awakened spirit of patriotism, inspired his sonnets of liberty with a nervous energy and passion that revealed a profoundly emotional nature. The sonnet remained with Wordsworth always a favorite form of poetic expression for a great variety of reflective and descriptive themes. The necessary compression saved him from his besetting sin of prolixity, and nowhere so consistently as in the sonnet does he reveal himself as a consummate master of expression.

The last fifty years of his life were passed in placid retirement among the English lakes, broken only by occasional visits to the Continent or Scotland. On his second Scottish tour in 1803 he learned to value the friendship of Sir Walter Scott, then at the height of his poetic fame. In February, 1805, the first great sorrow of his manhood fell upon him. His favorite brother, John, the captain of an East Indiaman, went down with his vessel off the Bill of Portland. The *Elegiac Stanzas* were written when this grief was fresh upon him, and *The Character of the Happy Warrior*, suggested by the death of Nelson, contains traits avowedly borrowed from the character of his brother.

In May, 1805, he brought to a conclusion his great autobiographical and philosophical poem *The Prelude*.

The Prelude.
May, 1805.

The Excursion.
1814.

This was intended to be 'the portico' of a more ambitious poem, *The Recluse*, which was destined never to be written. *The Excursion*, which appeared in 1814, and prompt-

ed Jeffrey's famous remark in the Edinburgh Review, "This will never do," is another mighty fragment of the unfinished edifice.

Two volumes of his collected poems appeared in 1807, containing the great odes, *To Duty*, and *On the Intimations of Immortality*, *Miscellaneous Poems*, 1807.

Sonnets, sonnets dedicated to liberty, and the poems of the Scottish tour. These volumes, more important in the history of English poetry than anything which had appeared since Milton, were coldly received. Confident in his ultimate triumph, Wordsworth wrote to his friend Lady Beaumont as follows: "Trouble not yourself upon their present reception; of what moment is that compared with what I trust is their destiny?—to console the afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think and feel, and, therefore, to become more actively and securely virtuous; this is their office, which I trust they will faithfully perform, long after we (that is, all that is mortal of us) are mouldered in our graves."

Wordsworth's estimate of his own poetry.

In 1808, the Wordsworths moved to a larger house, Allan Bank, near Easedale. Here his poetical activity flagged, but he produced two works in prose of some merit—a pamphlet stigmatizing the recent Convention of Cintra, and a *Guide to the Lakes*. The pamphlet is a lofty production in the manner of Burke, but, owing to its weightiness, was of comparatively little effect. The *Guide to the Lakes* deals in a masterly analytical fashion with the characteristics of the natural scenery he had celebrated in his verse.

Allan Bank, 1808-1810.

In 1810, occurred his painful breach with Coleridge,

which ended in a partial reconciliation seven years later.* His poetical activity was chiefly devoted to the composition of *The Excursion*, the narrative of a soulful pedlar. When it appeared, in 1814, the public were exhilarated by the brilliant poems of Lord Byron, and Wordsworth exacted of his readers a deliberate attention that they were not then prepared to give.

For three years (1810-1813) the Wordsworths now occupied the parsonage at Grasmere. It was a period of much unhappiness for the poet, and after the loss of two children he moved, in 1813, to Rydal Mount, beautifully situated two miles from the village of Grasmere. Here he resided until his death.

1810-1813.
The Parson-
age at
Grasmere.

Rydal Mount,
Grasmere,
1813-1850.

About the period of his removal to Rydal Mount he received, through the good offices of Lord Lonsdale, the post of distributor of stamps for the county of Westmoreland. This yielded the poet £400 a year and was in the nature of a sinecure, as a deputy discharged the main duties attaching to the office. When Wordsworth resigned this post in 1842, Sir Robert Peel, at the instance of Gladstone, conferred on the poet a pension of £300 a year.

Distributor
of stamps for
Westmore-
land. £400.

Pension of
£300 in 1842.

In 1839, the first indication of his growing popularity was manifested when the aged poet went up to Oxford to receive an honorary degree. His welcome there was as spontaneous as it was enthusiastic. When his old friend, Robert Southey, died, in 1843, and the laureateship fell vacant, there could be no two opinions as to the most fitting successor for the office. Wordsworth accepted

D.C.L. of
Oxford,
1839.

Laureate,
1843-1850.

* See page 21.

it upon the understanding that no poetry of an official character should be exacted of him.

Thus in dignity and honor the poet's life was drawing to a close. Famous men made pilgrimages to Grasmere, where the old man was always willing to discuss his own poetry in thorough detail. Among his disciples were Matthew Arnold, Aubrey de Vere, and Sir Henry Taylor. His last days were darkened by domestic grief through the loss of his daughter, Mrs. Quillinan. In March, 1850, while watching a beautiful sunset, Wordsworth caught a chill, which at his advanced age he could not resist. He gradually sank, and died on the 23rd of April. He was buried beside his children in Grasmere churchyard.

CHARACTER AND PERSONAL APPEARANCE

The hidden places which lie in the depths of ordinary human character are so withdrawn as to render analysis almost futile, or at the best a mere compromise between truth and probability. When the investigation

concerns a man of genius, the attempt would be incredibly more difficult, were it not that genius betrays itself into perpetual confession, and by sudden flashes here and there reveals its secret. Therefore, the student of Wordsworth's life, turning from the quiet incidents of his dignified career to a contemplation of his poems, will see reflected there the same grave simplicity, the same quiet dignity, the same steadfast sincerity of purpose. Vehement, even to the verge of passion in his youth, unsettled in his beliefs and vagrant in his habits, his maturer life is the story of a hard won conquest over himself. We may regret the gradual cooling of those early fires, the chill-

Words-
worth's
character.

ing of his young enthusiasms which would have inspired the glow and fervor which his poetry lacks. And yet we have missed the secret of Wordsworth's power if we fail to discern the true passion which underlies his greatest verse, a passion which has in it nothing hysterical nor erotic, is never simulated or artificial, but burns inconsumably nevertheless in the depths of his nature—the passion for noble living and steadfast endurance.

Wordsworth's character has been described as unamiable and selfish, and friendly criticism even has dwelt upon the narrowness and bigotry of his intellectual opinions. He was, perhaps, too profoundly conscious of his poetical mission; took himself too seriously almost, and like his great contemporary, Victor Hugo, worshipped too exclusively at the shrine of his own genius. Protracted solitude may intensify, but it certainly narrows, the range of the intellectual sympathies. Hugo emerged from his seventeen years of exile self-hypnotized, and apparently unconscious that the world had revolved upon its axis in the interval of his seclusion. Thus Wordsworth, too, grew constantly more incapable of grasping the significance of modern life, and when the intellectual stimulus of Coleridge's society was withdrawn, his poetical powers gradually but steadily declined. Had Wordsworth died thirty years earlier his poetic fame would have been more secure.

Four contemporary descriptions of Wordsworth's appearance are of particular interest. The portrait of

Haydon in this volume shows well the massiveness of his head, but the heavy-lidded eyes, while denoting contemplation, yet dull the expression of the face. Leigh Hunt and De Quincey dwell especially upon the significance of his eyes. . . .

His personal appearance.

"I never beheld eyes that looked so inspired, so supernatural. They were like fires, half burning, half smouldering, with a sort of acrid fixture of regard. One might imagine Ezekiel or Isaiah to have had such eyes."—Leigh Hunt.

"His eyes are not, under any circumstances, bright, lustrous, or piercing; but, after a long day's toil in walking, I have seen them assume an appearance, the most solemn and spiritual that it is possible for the human eyes to wear."—De Quincey *Works*, vol. ii.

"Wordsworth and Scott were as little alike in their aspect as in their genius. The only thing common to both countenances was that neither expressed a limitation. You might not have divined from either frontispiece the treasures of the volume,—it was not likely that you should;—but when you knew that there they were, there was nothing but what harmonized with your knowledge. Both were the faces of considerable men. Scott's had a character of rusticity. Wordsworth's was a face which did not assign itself to any class. It was a hardy, weather-beaten old face which might have belonged to a nobleman, a yeoman, a mariner, or a philosopher; for there was so much of a man that you lost sight of superadded distinctions. For my own part I should not, judging from his face, have guessed him to be a poet. To my eyes, there was more of strength than refinement in the face Perhaps what was wanting was only *physical* refinement. It was a rough grey face, full of rifts, and clefts, and fissures, out of which, some one said, you might expect lichens to grow."—*Autobiography of Henry Taylor*.

"For the rest, he talked well in his way; with veracity, easy brevity, and force, as a wise tradesman would of his tools and workshop, and as no unwise one

could. His voice was good, frank, and sonorous, though practically clear, distinct, and forcible, rather than melodious; the tone of him, business-like, sedately confident; no discourtesy, yet no anxiety about being courteous. A fine, wholesome rusticity, fresh as his mountain breezes, sat well on the stalwart veteran, and on all he said and did. You would have said that he was a usually taciturn man, glad to unlock himself to audience sympathetic and intelligent, when such offered itself. His face bore marks of much, not always peaceful, meditation; the look of it not bland or benevolent so much as close, impregnable, and hard; a man *multa tacere loquive paratus*, in a world where he had experienced no lack of contradictions as he strode along. The eyes were not very brilliant, but they had a quiet clearness; there was enough of brow, and well-shaped; rather too much cheek ('horse face' I have heard satirists say); face of squarish shape, and decidedly longish, as I think the head itself was (its length going horizontal); he was large-boned, lean, but still firm-knit, tall, and strong-looking when he stood, a right good old steel-gray figure, with rustic simplicity and dignity about him, and a vivacious strength looking through him, which might have suited one of those old steel-gray markgrafs whom Henry the Fowler set up to ward the 'marches' and do battle with the intrusive heathen in a stalwart and judicious manner."—Thomas Carlyle in *Reminiscences*.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

Born, April 7, 1770, at Cockermouth, Cumberland.

Goes to Hawkshead Grammar School, 1778.

Sent by guardians to St. John's College, Cambridge, October, 1787.

Foreign tour with Jones, 1790.

Graduates as B.A. without honors, January, 1791.

Residence in France, November, 1791, to December, 1792.

Publication of *The Evening Walk*, and *Descriptive Sketches*,

1793.

Legacy from Raisley Calvert of £900, 1794.

Lives at Racedown, Dorsetshire, autumn of 1795 to summer of 1797.

Composes *The Borderers*, a tragedy, 1795-1796.

Close friendship with Coleridge begins in 1797.

Rents a house at Alfoxden, 1797.

Genesis of the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1797.

Lyrical Ballads published September, 1798.

German visit, September, 1798, to April, 1799.

Lives at Dove Cottage, Grasmere, December 21, 1799, to 1806, 1807-1808.

The Lonsdale debt of £8,500 repaid, 1802.

Marries Mary Hutchinson, October, 1802.

Death by drowning of his brother, Captain John Wordsworth, 1805.

Lives at Coleorton, Leicestershire, 1806 to 1807.

Collected Edition of Poems, 1807.

Lives at Allan Bank, Easedale, 1808 to 1810.

Lives at the Parsonage, Grasmere, 1810 to 1812.

Loss of two children and removal to Rydal Mount, Grasmere, 1813 to 1850.

Appointed distributor of stamps for Westmoreland (£400 a year), 1813.

The Excursion appears, July, 1814.

Honorary degree of D.C.L. from Oxford, 1839.

Resigns his office as distributor of stamps, 1842.

Receives a pension from Sir R. Peel of £300, 1842.

Appointed Poet Laureate, 1843.

Dies at Grasmere, April 23, 1850.

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THE POETRY OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Coleridge, with rare insight, summarized Wordsworth's characteristic defects and merits as follows :

"The first characteristic, though only occasional defect, which I appear to myself to find in these poems is the *inconstancy* of the style. Under this name I refer to the sudden and unprepared transitions from lines or sentences of peculiar felicity (at all events striking and original) to a style, not only unimpassioned but undistinguished.

The second defect I can generalize with tolerable accuracy, if the reader will pardon an uncouth and newly-coined word. There is, I should say, not seldom a *matter-of-factness* in certain poems. This may be divided into, first, a laborious minuteness and fidelity in the representation of objects, and their positions, as

they appeared to the poet himself; secondly, the insertion of accidental circumstances, in order to the full explanation of his living characters, their dispositions and actions; which circumstances might be necessary to establish the probability of a statement in real life, when nothing is taken for granted by the hearer; but appear superfluous in poetry, where the reader is willing to believe for his own sake. . . .

Third; an undue predilection for the *dramatic* form in certain poems, from which one or other of two evils result. Either the thoughts and diction are different from that of the poet, and then there arises an incongruity of style, or they are the same and indistinguishable, where two are represented as talking, while in truth one man only speaks. . . .

The fourth class of defects is closely connected with the former; but yet are such as arise likewise from an intensity of feeling disproportionate to such knowledge and value of the objects described, as can be fairly anticipated of men in general, even of the most cultivated classes; and with which therefore few only, and those few particularly circumstanced, can be supposed to sympathize: in this class, I comprise occasional prolixity, repetition, and an eddying, instead of progression, of thought. . . .

Fifth and last; thoughts and images too great for the subject. This is an approximation to what might be called mental bombast, as distinguished from verbal: for, as in the latter there is a disproportion of the expressions to the thoughts, so in this there is a disproportion of thought to the circumstance and occasion. . . .

To these defects, which . . . are only occasional, I may oppose . . . the following (for the most part correspondent) excellencies:

First; an austere purity of language both grammatically and logically; in short a perfect appropriateness of the words to the meaning. . . .

The second characteristic excellence of Mr. Wordsworth's works is—a correspondent weight and sanity of the thoughts and sentiments, won not from books, but from the poet's own meditative observations. They are *fresh* and have the dew upon them. . . .

Third; . . . the sinewy strength and originality of single lines and paragraphs; the frequent *curiosa felicitas* of his diction. . . .

Fourth; the perfect truth of nature in his images and descriptions as taken immediately from nature, and proving a long and genial intimacy with the very spirit which gives the physiognomic expression to all the works of nature. Like a green field reflected in a calm and perfectly transparent lake, the image is distinguished from the reality only by its greater softness and lustre. Like the moisture or the polish on a pebble, genius neither distorts nor false-colors its objects; but on the contrary, brings out many a vein and many a tint, which escape the eye of common observation, thus raising to the rank of gems what had been often kicked away by the hurrying foot of the traveller on the dusty high-road of custom. . . .

Fifth; a meditative pathos, a union of deep and subtle thought with sensibility; a sympathy with man as man; the sympathy indeed of a contemplator, rather than a fellow-sufferer or co-mate, but of a contemplator, from whose view no difference of rank conceals the sameness of the nature; no injuries of wind or weather, of toil, or even of ignorance, wholly disguise the human face divine. The superscription and the image of the Creator still remain legible to *him* under the dark lines,

with which guilt or calamity had cancelled or cross-barred it. Here the Man and the Poet lose and find themselves in each other, the one as glorified, the latter as substantiated. In this mild and philosophic pathos, Wordsworth appears to me without a compeer. Such as he is: so he writes.

Last, and pre-eminently, I challenge for this poet the gift of imagination in the highest and strictest sense of the word. In the play of fancy, Wordsworth, to my feelings, is not always graceful, and sometimes recondite. . . . But in imaginative power, he stands nearest of all writers to Shakespeare and Milton; and yet in a kind perfectly unborrowed and his own."—*Biographia Literaria*, ch. xxii.

These are the grounds upon which Coleridge bases the poetic claims of Wordsworth.

Matthew Arnold, in the preface to his well-known collection of Wordsworth's poems, accords to the poet a rank no less exalted. "I firmly believe that the

**Matthew
Arnold's
criticism.**

poetical performance of Wordsworth is, after that of Shakespeare and Milton, of which all the world now recognizes the worth, undoubtedly the most considerable in our language from the Elizabethan age to the present time." His essential greatness is to be found in his shorter pieces, despite the frequent intrusion of much that is very inferior. Still it is "by the great body of powerful and significant work which remains to him, after every reduction and deduction has been made, that Wordsworth's superiority is proved."

Coleridge had not dwelt sufficiently, perhaps, upon the joyousness which results from Wordsworth's philosophy of human life and external nature. This Matthew Arnold considers to be the prime source of his greatness.

"Wordsworth's poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties; and because of the extraordinary power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it." Goethe's poetry, as Wordsworth once said, is not inevitable enough, is too consciously moulded by the supreme will of the artist. "But Wordsworth's poetry," writes Arnold, "when he is at his best, is inevitable, as inevitable as Nature herself. It might seem that Nature not only gave him the matter for his poem, but wrote his poem for him." The set poetic style of *The Excursion* is a failure, but there is something unique and unmatched in the simple grace of his narrative poems and lyrics. "Nature herself seems, I say, to take the pen out of his hand, and to write him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power. This arises from two causes: from the profound sincerity with which Wordsworth feels his subject, and also from the profoundly sincere and natural character of his subject itself. He can and will treat such a subject with nothing but the most plain, first hand, almost austere naturalness. His expression may often be called bald, as, for instance, in the poem of *Resolution and Independence*; but it is bald as the bare mountain tops are bald, with a baldness which is full of grandeur. . . . Wherever we meet with the successful balance, in Wordsworth, of profound truth of subject with profound truth of execution, he is unique."

Professor Dowden has also laid stress upon the harmonious balance of Wordsworth's nature, his different faculties seeming to interpenetrate one another, and yield mutual support. He has likewise called attention

to the austere naturalism of which Arnold speaks. "Wordsworth was a great naturalist in literature, but he was also a great idealist; and between the naturalist and the idealist in Wordsworth no opposition existed; each worked with the other, each served the other. While Scott, by allying romance with reality, saved romantic fiction from the extravagances and follies into which it had fallen, Wordsworth's special work was to open a higher way for naturalism in art by its union with ideal truth."

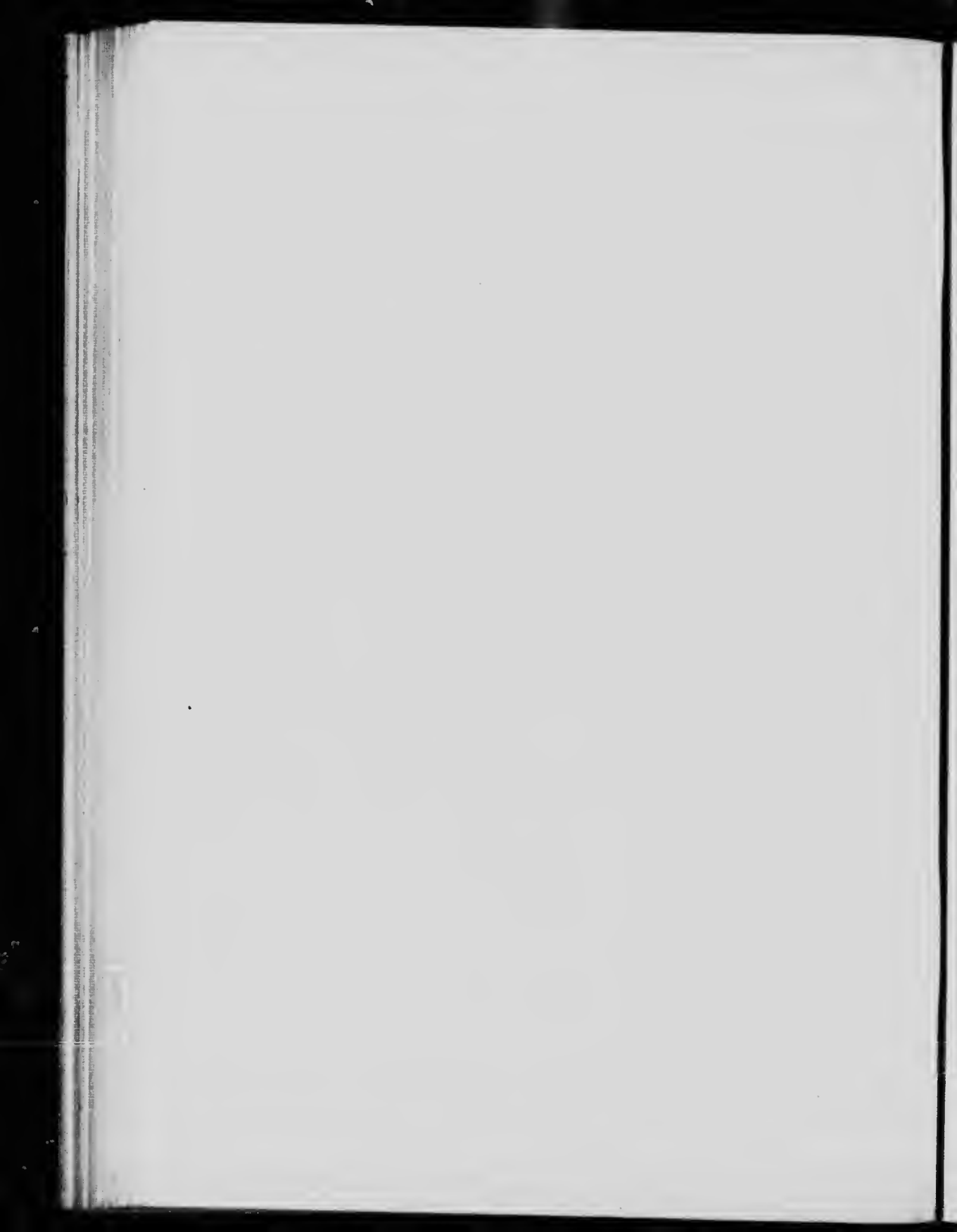
There is no need further to dwell upon Wordsworth's merits and defects in this place. To gain some idea of the position he holds in English poetry reference should be made to the introductory note upon the *Lyrical Ballads* (p. 43 f.), and to the "Brief Survey of Eighteenth Century Poetry" (p. 31 f.). In the final notes to the individual poems the characteristics of the poet are discussed in some detail, especially his profound views of the relations of man to Nature.

Criticism has long since ceased to ridicule his *Betty Foy*, and his *Harry Gill*, whose "teeth, they chatter, chatter still." Such malicious sport proved only too easy for Wordsworth's contemporaries, and still the essential value of his poetry was unimpaired.

The range of poetry is indeed inexhaustible, and even the greatest poets must suffer some subtraction from universal pre-eminence. Therefore, we may frankly admit the deficiencies of Wordsworth,—that he was lacking in dramatic force and in the power of characterization; that he was singularly deficient in humor, and therefore in the saving grace of self-criticism, in the capacity to see himself occasionally in a ridiculous light; that he has little of the romantic glamor and none of the narrative energy of Scott;

that Shelley's lyrical flights leave him plodding along the dusty highway; and that Byron's preternatural force makes his passion seem by contrast pale and ineffectual. All this and more may freely be granted, and yet for his influence upon English thought, and especially upon the poetic thought of his country, he must be named after Shakespeare and Milton. The intellectual value of his work will endure; for leaving aside much valuable doctrine, which from didactic excess fails as poetry, he has brought into the world a new philosophy of Nature, and has emphasized in a manner distinctively his own the dignity of simple manhood.

SELECT POEMS OF WORDSWORTH



THE REVERIE OF POOR SUSAN

At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears,
Hangs a Thrush that sings loud; it has sung for three
• years •

Poor Susan has passed by the spot, and has heard
In the silence of morning the song of the Bird.

'Tis a note of enchantment; what ails her? She sees 5
A mountain ascending, a vision of trees;
Bright volumes of vapor through Lothbury glide,
And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.

Green pastures she views in the midst of the dale,
Down which she so often has tripped with her pail; 10
And a single small cottage, a nest like a dove's,
The one only dwelling on earth that she loves.

She looks, and her heart is in heaven: but they fade,
The mist and the river, the hill and the shade:
The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise, 15
And the colors have all passed away from her eyes.

Note the extreme simplicity of the diction in this poem.

1. **Wood Street.** Runs north from Cheapside, London. The tree, on which Wordsworth heard the thrush, is still standing, but its destruction is threatened.

When daylight appears. Suggests the poverty of the woman.

7. **Lothbury.** A street behind the Bank of England.

8. **Cheapside.** M.E. *cheap* means *trade*.

EXPOSTULATION AND REPLY

"Why, William, on that old grey stone,
Thus for the length of half a day,
Why, William, sit you thus alone,
And dream your time away?

"Where are your books?—that light bequeathed
To Beings else forlorn and blind!
Up! up! and drink the spirit breathed
From dead men to their kind.

"You look round on your Mother Earth,
As if she for no purpose bore you;
As if you were her first-born birth,
And none had lived before you!"

One morning thus by Esthwaite Lake,
When life was sweet, I knew not why,
To me my good friend Matthew spake,
And thus I made reply:

"The eye—it cannot choose but see;
We cannot bid the ear be still;
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
Against, or with our will.

1. **William.** This is, of course, the poet himself.

13. **Esthwaite Lake.** A very small lake west of Windermere and south of the village of Hawkshead, where Wordsworth went to school.

15. **Matthew.** Some connection has been assumed between the character of Matthew and William Taylor, the schoolmaster at Hawkshead. Wordsworth writes as follows in the "Advertisement" to the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798): "The lines entitled *Expostulation and Reply*, and those which follow, arose out of conversation with a friend who was somewhat unreasonably attached to modern books of moral philosophy." This would identify Matthew in all probability with Coleridge or Sir James Mackintosh. The character is at the most composite.

"Nor less I deem that there are Powers
Which of themselves our minds impress;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.

"Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum 25
Of things forever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?

"Then ask not wherefore, here, alone,
Conversing as I may, 30
I sit upon this old grey stone,
And dream my time away."

THE TABLES TURNED

AN EVENING SCENE ON THE SAME SUBJECT

Up! up! my Friend, and quit your books,
Or surely you'll grow double:
Up! up! my Friend and clear your looks;
Why all this toil and trouble?

The sun, above the mountain's head, 5
A freshening lustre mellow
Through all the long green fields has spread,
And first sweet evening yellow.

News! 't is a dull and endless strife:
Come, hear the woodland linnet, 10
How sweet his music! on my life,
There's more of wisdom in it.

30. **Conversing as I may.** Holding converse or communion with nature and with his own quiet soul.

THE TABLES TURNED. This poem is the complement of the preceding.

And hark ! how blithe the throstle sings !
He, too, is no mean preacher:
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your Teacher. 15

She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless—
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness. 20

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can
Sweet is the lore which Nature brings; 25
Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:—
We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up those barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart 30
That watches and receives.

TO MY SISTER

It is the first mild day of March:
Each minute sweeter than before,
The redbreast sings from the tall larch
That stands beside our door.

21-24. Compare *To My Sister*, l. 25.32.

25-32. Wordsworth must have felt the exaggeration of these lines which seem to prejudice the value of science and art. The two poems are so argumentative in their cast that the poet seeks to enforce the contrast of the two attitudes of thought with all the vigor he can command. The student should be careful to discriminate accurately between the two points of view which these companion poems afford.

There is a blessing in the air, 5
Which seems a sense of joy to yield
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,
And grass in the green field.

My Sister ! ('t is a wish of mine)
Now that our morning meal is done, 10
Make haste, your morning task resign;
Come forth and feel the sun.

Edward will come with you;—and, pray,
Put on with speed your woodland dress;
And bring no book: for this one day 15
We'll give to idleness.

No joyless forms shall regulate
Our living calendar:
We from to-day, my Friend, will date
The opening of the year. 20

Love, now a universal birth,
From heart to heart is stealing,
From earth to man, from man to earth:
—It is the hour of feeling.

One moment now may give us more 25
Than years of toiling reason:
Our minds shall drink at every pore
The spirit of the season.

Some silent laws our hearts will make,
Which they shall long obey: 30
We for the year to come may take
Our temper from to-day.

13. **Edward.** The son of Basil Montagu. He was the bearer of the poem to Wordsworth's sister.

25-32. Compare *The Tables Turned*, l. 21-24.

And from the blessed power that rolls
 About, below, above,
 We'll frame the measure of our souls: 35
 That shall be tuned to love.

Then come, my Sister! come, I pray,
 With speed put on your woodland dress;
 —And bring no book: for this one day
 We'll give to idleness. 40

NUTTING

——It seems a day
 (I speak of one from many singled out),
 One of those heavenly days that cannot die;
 When, in the eagerness of boyish hope,
 I left our cottage threshold, sallying forth 5
 With a huge wallet o'er my shoulders slung,
 A nutting-crook in hand, and turned my steps
 Toward some far-distant wood, a Figure quaint,
 Tricked out in proud disguise of cast-off weeds,
 Which for that service had been husbanded, 10
 By exhortation of my frugal Dame,—
 Motley accoutrement, of power to smile
 At thorns, and brakes, and brambles, and, in truth,

5. **our cottage threshold.** "The house at which I was boarded during the time I was at school." (Wordsworth's note, 1800). The school was the Hawkshead School.

9. **Tricked out** = *dressed*. The verb "to trick" = "to dress" is derived probably from the noun, "trick" in the sense of 'a dexterous artifice,' 'a touch.' See "Century Dictionary."

cast-off weeds = *cast-off clothes*. Wordsworth originally wrote 'of Beggar's weeds.' What prompted him to change the expression?

10. **for that service.** i.e., for nutting.

12-13. **of power to smile At thorns** = *able to defy*, etc. Not because of their strength, but because so ragged that additional rents were of small account.

More ragged than need was ! O'er pathless rocks,
 Through beds of matted fern and tangled thickets, 15
 Forcing my way, I came to one dear nook
 Unvisited, where not a broken bough
 Drooped with its withered leaves, ungracious sign
 Of devastation; but the hazels rose
 Tall and erect, with tempting clusters hung, 20
 A virgin scene ! A little while I stood,
 Breathing with such suppression of the heart
 As joy delights in; and with wise restraint
 Voluptuous, fearless of a rival, eyed
 The banquet; or beneath the trees I sate 25
 Among the flowers, and with the flowers I played;
 A temper known to those, who, after long
 And weary expectation, have been blest
 With sudden happiness beyond all hope.
 Perhaps it was a bower beneath whose leaves 30
 The violets of five seasons reappear
 And fade, unseen by any human eye;
 Where fairy water-breaks do murmur on
 Forever; and I saw the sparkling foam,
 And, with my cheek on one of those green stones 35
 That, fleeced with moss, under the shady trees,
 Lay round me, scattered like a flock of sheep,
 I heard the murmur and the murmuring sound,

21. **virgin** = *unmarred, undevastated*.

31. Explain the line. Notice the poetical way in which the poet conveys the idea of solitude, (l. 30-32).

33. **fairy water-breaks** = *wavelets, ripples*. Cf.:-

Many a silvery *water-break*
 Above the golden gravel.

Tennyson, *The Brook*.

36. **fleeced with moss**. Suggest a reason why the term "fleeced" has peculiar appropriateness here.

In that sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay
 Tribute to ease; and of its joy secure, 40
 The heart luxuriates with indifferent things,
 Wasting its kindliness on stocks and stones,
 And on the vacant air. Then up I rose,
 And dragged to earth both branch and bough, with
 crash
 And merciless ravage: and the shady nook 15
 Of hazels, and the green and mossy bower,
 Deformed and sullied, patiently gave up
 Their quiet being: and unless I now
 Confound my present feelings with the past,
 Ere from the mutilated bower I turned 50
 Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings,
 I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
 The silent trees, and saw the intruding sky.—
 Then, dearest Maiden, move along these shades
 In gentleness of heart; with gentle hand 55
 Touch,—for there is a spirit in the woods.

39-40. Paraphrase these lines to bring out their meaning.

43-48. **Then up I rose.** Contrast this active exuberant pleasure not unmixed with pain with the passive meditative joy that the preceding lines express.

47-48. **patiently gave up Their quiet being.** Notice the attribution of life to inanimate nature. Wordsworth constantly held that there was a mind and all the attributes of mind in nature. Cf. l. 56, "for there is a spirit in the woods."

53. **and saw the intruding sky.** Bring out the force of this passage.

54. **Then, dearest Maiden.** This is a reference to the poet's sister, Dorothy Wordsworth.

56. **for there is a spirit in the woods.** Cf. *Tintern Abbey*, 101 f.

A motion and a spirit that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things.

INFLUENCE OF NATURAL OBJECTS

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
 Thou Soul, that art the Eternity of thought!
 And giv'st to forms and images a breath
 And everlasting motion! not in vain,
 By day or starlight, thus from my first dawn
 Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
 The passions that build up our human soul;
 Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man:
 But with high objects, with enduring things,
 With life and nature: purifying thus
 The elements of feeling and of thought,
 And sanctifying by such discipline
 Both pain and fear,—until we recognize
 A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
 With stinted kindness. In November days,
 When vapors rolling down the valleys made
 A lonely scene more lonesome; among woods
 At noon; and 'mid the calm of summer nights,

1-14. In what other poems does Wordsworth describe "the education of nature?"

8. Nature's teaching is never sordid nor mercenary, but always purifying and ennobling.

10. **purifying**, also **sanctifying** (l. 12), refer to "Soul" (l. 2).

12-14. Human cares are lightened in proportion to our power of sympathizing with nature. The very beatings of our heart acquire a certain grandeur from the fact that they are a process of nature and linked thus to the general life of things. It is possible that "beatings of the heart" may figuratively represent the mere play of the emotions, and thus have a bearing upon the words "pain and fear" in line 13.

15. **fellowship**. Communion with nature in her varying aspects as described in the following lines.

When, by the margin of the trembling lake, 20
 Beneath the gloomy hills, homeward I went
 In solitude, such intercourse was mine:
 Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
 And by the waters, all the summer long.
 And in the frosty season, when the sun 25
 Was set, and, visible for many a mile,
 The cottage windows through the twilight blazed,
 I heeded not the summons : happy time
 It was indeed for all of us ; for me
 It was a time of rapture ! Clear and loud 30
 The village clock tolled six—I wheeled about,
 Proud and exulting like an untired horse,
 That cares not for his home.—All shod with steel
 We hissed along the polished ice, in games
 Confederate, imitative of the chase 35
 And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,
 The pack loud-chiming, and the hunted hare.
 So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
 And not a voice was idle ; with the din
 Smitten, the precipices rang aloud ; 40
 The leafless trees and every icy crag
 Tinkled like iron ; while far-distant hills
 Into the tumult sent an alien sound
 Of melancholy, not unnoticed, while the stars,

31. **village clock.** The village was Hawkshead.

35. **Confederate.** Qualifies "we," or "games." Point out the different shades of meaning for each agreement.

42. **Tinkled like iron.** "When very many are skating together, the sounds and the noises give an impulse to the icy trees, and the woods all round the lake *tinkle*." S. T. Coleridge in *The Friend*, ii, 325 (1818).

42-44. The keenness of Wordsworth's sense perceptions was very remarkable. His susceptibility to impressions of sound is well illustrated in this passage, which closes (l. 43-46) with a color picture of striking beauty and appropriateness.

Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west 43
The orange sky of evening died away.

Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng,
To cut across the reflex of a star ; 50
Image, that, flying still before me, gleamed
Upon the glassy plain ; and oftentimes,
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still 55
The rapid line of motion, then at once
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
Stopped short, yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal round ! 60
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
Feebier and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a summer sea.

50. **reflex** = *reflection*. Cf.:

Like the *reflex* of the moon
Seen in a wave under green leaves.

Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, iii, 4.

In later editions Wordsworth altered these lines as follows :

To cut across the image. 1809.

To cross the bright reflection. 1820.

54-60. The effect of rapid motion is admirably described. The spinning effect which Wordsworth evidently has in mind we have all noticed in the fields which seem to revolve when viewed from a swiftly moving train. However, a skater from the low level of a stream would see only the fringe of trees sweep past him. The darkness and the height of the banks would not permit him to see the relatively motionless objects in the distance on either hand.

57-58. This method of stopping short upon one's heels might prove disastrous.

58-60. The effect of motion persists after the motion has ceased.

62-63. The apparent motion of the cliffs grows feebler by degrees until "all was tranquil as a summer sea." In *The*

'THREE YEARS SHE GREW'

Three years she grew in sun and shower,
 Then Nature said, 'A lovelier flower
 On earth was never sown !
 This Child I to myself will take ;
 She shall be mine, and I will make
 A Lady of my own.

5

'Myself will to my darling be
 Both law and impulse ; and with me
 The Girl, in rock and plain,
 In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
 Shall feel an overseeing power
 To kindle or restrain.

10

'She shall be sportive as the fawn
 That wild with glee across the lawn
 Or up the mountain springs ;
 And hers shall be the breathing balm,
 And hers the silence and the calm
 Of mute insensate things.

15

'The floating clouds their state shall lend
 To her ; for her the willow bend ;
 Nor shall she fail to see
 Even in the motions of the storm

20

Prelude, 1809, Wordsworth substituted "Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep." Suggest a reason for this, and criticise the change.

16. **breathing balm.** The fragrance which exhales from trees or shrubs, or the healing power which resides in their odorous breath. "Balm" is originally the oily substance exuded from resinous trees, and by extension of meaning the aromatic odor and healing power of the exudation.

20-24. **for her the willow bend.** etc. The willow will mould her form to symmetry, and even the sweeping cloud-*ies* of approaching storms will communicate their grace to her

Grace that shall mould the Maiden's form
By silent sympathy.

'The stars of midnight all be dear
To her; and she shall lean her ear

In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round.
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face

'And vital feelings of delight
Shall rear her form to stature high
Her virgin bosom swell

Such thoughts to Lucy I
While she and I together live
Here in this happy dell.'

Thus Nature spake—The work was done—
How soon my Lucy's race was run!

She died, and left to me
This heath, this calm, and quiet scene;
The memory of what has been,
And never more will be.

MICHAEL

A PASTORAL POEM

From the public way you turn your steps
To the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,
You will suppose that with an upright path
Your feet must struggle in such bold ascent
The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.

Green-head Ghyll. Near Dove Cottage, Wordsworth's home at Grasmere.

Ghyll. A short, steep, and narrow valley with a stream running through it.

But, courage ! for around that boisterous brook
The mountains have all opened out themselves,
And made a hidden valley of their own.
No habitation can be seen ; but they
Who journey thither find themselves alone 10
With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites
That overhead are sailing in the sky.
It is in truth an utter solitude ;
Nor should I have made mention of this Dell
But for one object which you might pass by, 15
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook
Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones,
And to that simple object appertains
A story,—unenriched with strange events,
Yet not unfit, I deem, for the fireside, 20
Or for the summer shade. It was the first
Of those domestic tales that spake to me
Of Shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men
Whom I already loved :—not verily
For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills 25
Where was their occupation and abode.
And hence this Tale, while I was yet a Boy
Careless of books, yet having felt the power
Of Nature, by the gentle agency
Of natural objects, led me on to feel 30
For passions that were not my own, and think
(At random and imperfectly indeed)
On man, the heart of man, and human life.
Therefore, although it be a history
Homely and rude, I will relate the same 35

17. In Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal for October 11, 1800, we read : "After dinner we walked up Greenhead Gill in search of a sheepfold. . . . The sheepfold is falling away. It is built in the form of a heart unequally divided.

For the delight of a few natural hearts ;
 And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake
 Of youthful Poets, who among these hills
 Will be my second self when I am gone.

Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale 40
 There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name ;
 An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.
 His bodily frame had been from youth to age
 Of an unusual strength : his mind was keen,
 Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs, 45
 And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
 And watchful more than ordinary men.
 Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,
 Of blasts of every tone ; and oftentimes,
 When others heeded not, he heard the South 50
 Make subterraneous music, like the noise
 Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.
 The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
 Bethought him, and he to himself would say,
 "The winds are now devising work for me !" 55
 And, truly, at all times, the storm, that drives

48. **the meaning of all winds.** This is not a figurative statement. Michael knows by experience whether the sound and direction of the wind forebode storm or fair weather,—precisely the practical kind of knowledge which a herdsman should possess.

51. **subterraneous.** The meaning of this word has given rise to discussion. "Subterraneous" cannot here be literally employed, unless it refer to the sound of the wind in hollow places, and beneath overhanging crags.

51-52. **like the noise, etc.** Is there a special appropriateness in the use of a Scottish simile? What is the general character of the similes throughout the poem?

56-77. Wordsworth never attributes to Michael the subtler and more philosophical sensations which he himself derived from nature. Such poems as *The Prelude* or *The Excursion* contain many elevated passages on the influence of nature, which would have been exceedingly inappropriate here.

The traveller to a shelter, summoned him
Up to the mountains : he had been alone
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
That came to him, and left him, on the heights. 60
So lived he till his eightieth year was past.
And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,
Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts.
Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed 65
The common air ; hills, which with vigorous step
He had so often climbed ; which had impressed
So many incidents upon his mind
Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear ;
Which, like a book, preserved the memory 70
Of the dumb animals whom he had saved,
Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts
The certainty of honorable gain ;
Those fields, those hills—what could they less?—had
laid
Strong hold on his affections, were to him 75
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
The pleasure which there is in life itself.

His days had not been passed in singleness.
His Helpmate was a comely matron, old—
Though younger than himself full twenty years. 80
She was a woman of a stirring life,
Whose heart was in her house: two wheels she had
Of antique form ; this large, for spinning wool ;
That small, for flax ; and if one wheel had rest,
It was because the other was at work. 85
The Pair had but one inmate in their house,
An only Child, who had been born to them
When Michael, telling o'er his years, began

To deem that he was old,—in shepherd's phrase,
With one foot in the grave. This only Son, 90
With two brave sheep-dogs tried in many a storm,
The one of an inestimable worth,
Made all their household. I may truly say
That they were as a proverb in the vale
For endless industry. When day was gone, 95
And from their occupations out of doors
The Son and Father were come home, even then
Their labor did not cease ; unless when all
Turned to the cleanly supper board, and there,
Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk, 100
Sat round the basket piled with oaten cakes,
And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when the
meal

Was ended, Luke (for so the Son was named)
And his old Father both betook themselves
To such convenient work as might employ 105
Their hands by the fireside ; perhaps to card
Wool for the Housewife's spindle, or repair
Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,
Or other implement of house or field.

Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge, 110
That in our ancient uncouth country style
With huge and black projection overbrowed
Large space beneath, as duly as the light
Of day grew dim the Housewife hung a lamp ;
An aged utensil, which had performed 115
Service beyond all others of its kind.
Early at evening did it burn,—and late,
Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,
Which, going by from year to year, had found,

115. Scan this line.

And left the couple neither gay perhaps 120
 Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,
 Living a life of eager industry.
 And now, when Luke had reached his eighteenth year,
 There by the light of this old lamp they sate,
 Father and Son, while far into the night 125
 The Housewife plied her own peculiar work,
 Making the cottage through the silent hours
 Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.
 This light was famous in its neighborhood,
 And was a public symbol of the life 130
 That thrifty Pair had lived. For, as it chanced,
 Their cottage on a plot of rising ground
 Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,
 High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,
 And westward to the village near the lake ; 135
 And from this constant light, so regular,
 And so far seen, the House itself, by all
 Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
 Both old and young, was named the EVENING STAR.

Thus living on through such a length of years, 140
 The Shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs
 Have loved his Helpmate; but to Michael's heart

121. **Nor cheerful.** The epithet seems not well chosen in view of the fact that all the circumstances of their life breathe a spirit of quiet cheerfulness. Surely the light (129-131) was a symbol of cheer.

126. **peculiar work.** Bring out the force of the epithet.

134. **Easedale.** Near Grasmere. **Dunmail-Raise.** The pass leading from Grasmere to Keswick. **Raise.** A provincial word meaning "an ascent."

139. **the Evening Star.** This name was actually given to a neighboring house.

This son of his old age was yet more dear—
Less from instinctive tenderness, the same
Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all— 145
Than that a child, more than all other gifts
That earth can offer to declining man,
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,
And stirrings of inquietude, when they
By tendency of nature needs must fail. 150
Exceeding was the love he bare to him,
His heart and his heart's joy! For oftentimes
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
Had done him female service, not alone
For pastime and delight, as is the use 155
Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced
To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked
His cradle, as with a woman's gentle hand.

And in a later time, ere yet the Boy
Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love, 160
Albeit of a stern, unbending mind,
To have the Young-one in his sight, when he
Wrought in the field, or on his shepherd's stool
Sat with a fettered sheep before him stretched
Under the large old oak, that near his door 165
Stood single, and, from matchless depth of shade,
Chosen for the shearer's covert from the sun,
Thence in our rustic dialect was called

143-152. The love of Michael for Luke is inwrought with his love for his home and for the land which surrounds it. These he desires at his death to hand down unencumbered to his son. "I have attempted," Wordsworth wrote to Poole, "to give a picture of a man of strong mind and lively sensibility, agitated by two of the most powerful affections of the human heart—the parental affection and the love of property, *landed* property, including the feelings of inheritance, home and personal and family independence."

145. Scan this line.

The CLIPPING TREE, a name which yet it bears.
 There, while they two were sitting in the shade, 170
 With others round them, earnest all and blithe,
 Would Michael exercise his heart with looks
 Of fond correction and reproof bestowed
 Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep
 By catching at their legs, or with his shouts 175
 Scared them while they lay still beneath the shears.

And when by Heaven's good grace the Boy grew up
 A healthy Lad, and carried in his cheek
 Two steady roses that were five years old;
 Then Michael from a winter coppice cut 180
 With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped
 With iron, making it throughout in all
 Due requisites a perfect shepherd's staff,
 And gave it to the Boy; wherewith equipped
 He as a watchman oftentimes was placed 185
 At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock;
 And, to his office prematurely called,
 There stood the urchin, as you will divine,
 Something between a hindrance and a help;
 And for this cause not always, I believe, 190
 Receiving from his Father hire of praise;
 Though naught was left undone which staff, or voice,
 Or looks, or threatening gestures, could perform.

But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand
 Against the mountain blasts; and to the heights, 195
 Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,
 He with his Father daily went, and they
 Were as companions, why should I relate

169. **The Clipping Tree.** Clipping is the word used in the North of England for shearing. (Wordsworth's note, 1800).

182. Notice the entire absence of pause at the end of the line. Point out other instances of run-on lines (*enjambement*).

That objects which the Shepherd loved before
Were dearer now? that from the Boy there came 200
Feelings and emanations,—things which were
Light to the sun and music to the wind;
And that the old Man's heart seemed born again?

Thus in his Father's sight the boy grew up:
And now, when he had reached his eighteenth year, 205
He was his comfort and his daily hope.

While in this sort the simple household lived
From day to day, to Michael's ear there came
Distressful tidings. Long before the time
Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound 210
In surety for his brother's son, a man
Of an industrious life, and ample means;
But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly
Had pressed upon him; and old Michael now
Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture, 215
A grievous penalty, but little less
Than half his substance. This unlooked-for claim,
At the first hearing, for a moment took
More hope out of his life than he supposed
That any old man ever could have lost. 220
As soon as he had armed himself with strength
To look his trouble in the face, it seemed
The Shepherd's sole resource to sell at once
A portion of his patrimonial fields.
Such was his first resolve; he thought again, 225
And his heart failed him. "Isabel," said he,
Two evenings after he had heard the news,
"I have been toiling more than seventy years,
And in the open sunshine of God's love
Have we all lived; yet if these fields of ours 230
Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think

That I could not lie quiet in my grave.
 Our lot is a hard lot ; the sun himself
 Has scarcely been more diligent than I ;
 And I have lived to be a fool at last 235
 To my own family. An evil man
 That was, and made an evil choice, if he
 Were false to us ; and if he were not false,
 There are ten thousand to whom loss like this
 Had been no sorrow. I forgive him ;—but 240
 'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.

“ When I began, my purpose was to speak
 Of remedies and of a cheerful hope.
 Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel ; the land
 Shall not go from us, and it shall be free ; 245
 He shall possess it, free as is the wind
 That passes over it. We have, thou know'st,
 Another kinsman ; he will be our friend
 In this distress. He is a prosperous man,
 Thriving in trade ; and Luke to him shall go, 250
 And with his kinsman's help and his own thrift
 He quickly will repair this loss, and then
 He may return to us. If here he stay,
 What can be done ? Where every one is poor,
 What can be gained ? ”

At this the old Man paused, 255
 And Isabel sat silent, for her mind
 Was busy, looking back into past times.
 There's Richard Bateman, thought she to herself,
 He was a parish-boy,—at the church-door
 They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence, 260
 And half-pennies, wherewith the neighbors bought
 A basket, which they filled with pedlar's wares ;

259. parish-boy. Depending on charity.

And, with his basket on his arm, the lad
 Went up to London, found a master there,
 Who, out of many, chose the trusty boy 265
 To go and overlook his merchandise
 Beyond the seas ; where he grew wondrous rich,
 And left estates and moneys to the poor,
 And at his birthplace built a chapel, floored
 With marble, which he sent from foreign lands. 270
 These thoughts, and many others of like sort,
 Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel
 And her face brightened. The old Man was glad,
 And thus resumed: " Well, Isabel, this scheme,
 These two days, has been meat and drink to me. 275
 Far more than we have lost is left us yet.
 —We have enough—I wish indeed that I
 Were younger;—but this hope is a good hope.
 Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best
 Buy for him more, and let us send him forth 280
 To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night:
 —If he *could* go, the Boy should go to-night."

Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth
 With a light heart. The Housewife for five days
 Was restless morn and night, and all day long 285
 Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare
 Things needful for the journey of her son.
 But Isabel was glad when Sunday came

268-270. Wordsworth added the following note on these lines :
 " The story alluded to here is well known in the country. The
 chapel is called Ing's Chapel ; and is on the right hand side of
 the road leading from Kendal to Ambleside."

283. **and to the fields went forth.** Observe the inconsistency. The conversation took place in the evening. See l. 227.

284 f. **With a light heart.** Michael's growing misgivings are subtly represented in the following lines, and the renewal of his hopes.

To stop her in her work; for, when she lay
 By Michael's side, she through the last two nights 290
 Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:
 And when they rose at morning she could see
 That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon
 She said to Luke, while they two by themselves
 Were sitting at the door, "Thou must not go: 295
 We have no other Child but thee to lose,
 None to remember—do not go away,
 For if thou leave thy Father he will die."
 The Youth made answer with a jocund voice;
 And Isabel, when she had told her fears, 300
 Recovered heart. That evening her best fare
 Did she bring forth, and all together sat
 Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

With daylight Isabel resumed her work;
 And all the ensuing week the house appeared 305
 As cheerful as a grove in Spring: at length
 The expected letter from their kinsman came,
 With kind assurances that he would do
 His utmost for the welfare of the Boy;
 To which requests were added, that forthwith 310
 He might be sent to him. Ten times or more
 The letter was read over; Isabel
 Went forth to show it to the neighbors round;
 Nor was there at that time on English land
 A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel 315
 Had to her house returned, the old Man said,
 "He shall depart to-morrow." To this word
 The Housewife answered, talking much of things
 Which, if at such short notice he should go,
 Would surely be forgotten. But at length 320
 She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.

Near the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,
In that deep valley, Michael had designed
To build a Sheep-fold; and, before he heard
The tidings of his melancholy loss, 325
For this same purpose he had gathered up
A heap of stones, which by the streamlet's edge
Lay thrown together, ready for the work.
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked;
And soon as they had reached the place he stopped, 330
And thus the old man spake to him:—"My Son,
To-morrow thou wilt leave me; with full heart
I look upon thee, for thou art the same
That wert a promise to me ere thy birth
And all thy life hast been my daily joy. 335
I will relate to thee some little part
Of our two histories; 'twill do thee good
When thou art from me, even if I should touch
On things thou canst not know of.—After thou
First cam'st into the world—as oft befalls 340
To newborn infants—thou didst sleep away
Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue
Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,
And still I loved thee with increasing love.
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds 345
Than when I heard thee by our own fireside
First uttering, without words, a natural tune;
While thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy
Sing at thy Mother's breast. Month followed month,
And in the open fields my life was passed, 350
And on the mountains; else I think that thou
Hadst been brought up upon thy Father's knees.
But we were playmates, Luke; among these hills,
As well thou knowest, in us the old and young
Have played together, nor with me didst thou 355

Lack any pleasure which a boy can know."
Luke had a manly heart; but at these words;
He sobbed aloud. The old Man grasped his hand,
And said, "Nay, do not take it so—I see
That these are things of which I need not speak. 360
Even to the utmost I have been to thee
A kind and a good Father; and herein
I but repay a gift which I myself
Received at others' hands; for, though now old
Beyond the common life of man, I still 365
Remember them who loved me in my youth.
Both of them sleep together; here they lived,
As all their Forefathers had done; and, when
At length their time was come, they were not loath
To give their bodies to the family mould. 370
I wished that thou should'st live the life they lived;
But 'tis a long time to look back, my Son,
And see so little gain from threescore years.
These fields were burthened when they came to me;
Till I was forty years of age, not more 375
Than half of my inheritance was mine.
I toiled and toiled; God blessed me in my work,
And till the three weeks past the land was free.
—It looks as if it never could endure
Another Master. Heaven forgive me, Luke, 380
If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good
That thou shouldst go."

At this the old Man paused;
Then, pointing to the stones near which they stood,
Thus, after a short silence, he resumed:

367-368. These lines forcibly show how tenaciously Michael's feelings were rooted in the soil of his home. Hence the extreme pathos of the situation.

"This was a work for us; and now, my Son,
 It is a work for me. But, lay one stone,—
 Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands.
 Nay, Boy, be of good hope; we both may live
 To see a better day. At eighty-four
 I still am strong and hale;—do thou thy part;
 I will do mine.—I will begin again
 With many tasks that were resigned to thee;
 Up to the heights, and in among the storms,
 Will I without thee go again, and do
 All works which I was wont to do alone,
 Before I knew thy face. Heaven bless thee, Boy!
 Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast
 With many hopes; it should be so—yes, yes,—
 I knew that thou couldst never have a wish
 To leave me, Luke; thou hast been bound to me
 Only by links of love: when thou art gone
 What will be left to us!—But I forget
 My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone,
 As I requested; and hereafter, Luke,
 When thou art gone away, should ever meet
 Be thy companions, think of me, my Son.
 And of this moment; hither turn thy thoughts,
 And God will strengthen thee: amid all fear
 And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou
 May'st bear in mind the life thy Fathers lived,
 Who, being innocent, did for that cause
 Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well—
 When thou return'st, thou in this place wilt see
 A work which is not here: a covenant
 'Twill be between us; but, whatever fate

388. Observe the dramatic force of this line.

393-396. What unconscious poetry there is in the old man's words!

Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,
And bear thy memory with me to the grave."

The Shepherd ended here; and Luke stooped down,
And, as his Father had requested, laid
The first stone of the Sheep-fold. At the sight 420
The old Man's grief broke from him; to his heart
He pressed his Son, he kissèd him and wept;
And to the house together they returned.
—Hushed was that House in peace, or seeming peace,
Ere the night fell:—with morrow's dawn the Boy 425
Began his journey, and when he had reached
The public way, he put on a bold face;
And all the neighbors, as he passed their doors,
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,
That followed him till he was out of sight. 430

A good report did from their Kinsman come,
Of Luke and his well doing: and the Boy
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,
Which, as the Housewife phrased it, were throughout
"The prettiest letters that were ever seen." 435
Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.
So, many months passed on; and once again
The Shepherd went about his daily work
With confident and cheerful thoughts; and now
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour 440
He to that valley took his way, and there
Wrought at the Sheep-fold. Meantime Luke began
To slacken in his duty; and, at length,
He in the dissolute city gave himself
To evil courses: ignominy and shame 445

420. Scan this line.

445. Scan this line.

Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
To seek a hiding place beyond the seas.

There is a comfort in the strength of love;
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
Would overset the brain, or break the heart: 430
I have conversed with more than one who well
Remember the old Man,*and what he was
Years after he had heard this heavy news.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks 455
He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud,
And listened to the wind; and, as before,
Performed all kinds of labor for his sheep,
And for the land, his small inheritance.
And to that hollow dell from time to time 460
Did he repair, to build the Fold of which
His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet
The pity which was then in every heart
For the old Man—and 'tis believed by all
That many and many a day he thither went, 465
And never lifted up a single stone.

There by the Sheep-fold, sometimes was he seen
Sitting alone, or with his faithful Dog,
Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.
The length of full seven years, from time to time 470

466. Matthew Arnold commenting on this line says: "The right sort of verse to choose from Wordsworth, if we are to seize his true and most characteristic form of expression, is a line like this from Michael: 'And never lifted up a single stone.' There is nothing subtle in it, no heightening, no study of poetic style strictly so called, at all; yet it is an expression of the highest and most truly expressive kind."

467 f. Note the noble simplicity and pathos of these closing lines. There is a reserved force of pent-up pathos here, which without effort reaches the height of dramatic effectiveness.

He at the building of this Sheep-fold wrought,
 And left the work unfinished when he died.
 Three years, or little more, did Isabel
 Survive her Husband; at her death the estate
 Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand. 475
 The Cottage which was named the EVENING STAR
 Is gone,—the ploughshare has been through the
 ground
 On which it stood; great changes have been wrought
 In all the neighborhood:—yet the oak is left,
 That grew beside their door; and the remains 480
 Of the unfinished Sheep-fold may be seen
 Beside the boisterous brook of Green-head Ghyll.

TO THE DAISY

Bright Flower ! whose home is everywhere,
 Bold in maternal Nature's care,
 And all the long year through the heir
 Of joy and sorrow,
 Methinks that there abides in thee 5
 Some concord with humanity,
 Given to no other flower I see
 The forest thorough !
 Is it that Man is soon deprest ?
 A thoughtless Thing ! who, once unblest, 10
 Do's little on his memory rest,
 Or on his reason,
 And Thou would'st teach him how to find
 A shelter under every wind,

8. **thorough.** This is by derivation the correct form of the modern word "through." A.S. *thurh*, M.E. *thuruh*. The use of "thorough" is now purely adjectival, except in archaic or poetic speech.

A hope for times that are unkind,
And every season?

Thou wander'st the wide world about,
Uncheck'd by pride or scrupulous doubt,
With friends to greet thee, or without,
Yet pleased and willing;

Meek, yielding to the occasion's call,
And all things suffering from all,
Thy function apostolical
In peace fulfilling.

TO THE CUCKOO

O blithe New-comer ! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice.
O Cuckoo ! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice ?

24. **apostolical.** The stanza in which this word occurs was omitted in 1827 and 1832, because the expression was censured as almost profane. Wordsworth in his dictated note to Miss Fenwick has the following: "The word [apostolical] is adopted with reference to its derivation, implying something sent out on a mission; and assuredly this little flower, especially when the subject of verse, may be regarded, in its humble degree, as administering both to moral and spiritual purposes."

1. **O blithe New-comer.** The Cuckoo is migratory, and appears in England in the early spring. Compare *Solitary Reaper*, l. 16.

I have heard. i. e., in my youth.

3. **shall I call thee Bird?** Compare Shelley.
Hail to thee, blithe spirit !
Bird thou never wert.

To a Skylark.

4. **a wandering Voice?** Consult Wordsworth's note, (p. 224.)

While I am lying on the grass, 5
 Thy twofold shout I hear;
 From hill to hill it seems to pass,
 At once far off, and near.

Though babbling only to the Vale
 Of sunshine and of flowers, 10
 Thou bringest unto me a tale
 Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring !
 Even yet thou art to me
 No bird, but an invisible thing, 15
 A voice, a mystery;

The same whom in my schoolboy days
 I listened to; that Cry
 Which made me look a thousand ways
 In bush, and tree, and sky. 20

To seek thee did I often rove
 Through woods and on the green;
 And thou wert still a hope, a love;
 Still longed for, never seen.

And I can listen to thee yet; 25
 Can lie upon the plain
 And listen, till I do beget
 That golden time again.

6. **twofold shout.** Twofold, because consisting of a double note. Compare Wordsworth's sonnet, *To the Cuckoo*, l. 4:
 "With its twin notes inseparably paired."

Wordsworth employs the word "shout" in several of his Cuckoo descriptions. See *The Excursion*, ii. l. 346-348 and vii. l. 408; also the following from *Yes! it was the Mountain Echo*:

Yes! it was the mountain echo,
 Solitary, clear, profound,
 Answering to the shouting Cuckoo;
 Giving to her sound for sound.

O blessed Bird ! the earth we pace
 Again appears to be
 An unsubstantial, faery place;
 That is fit home for Thee !

30

THE GREEN LINNET

Beneath these fruit-tree boughs that shed
 Their snow-white blossoms on my head,
 With brightest sunshine round me spread
 Of spring's unclouded weather,
 In this sequestered nook how sweet
 To sit upon my orchard-seat !
 And birds and flowers once more to greet,
 My last year's friends together.

5

One have I marked, the happiest guest
 In all this covert of the blest:
 Hail to Thee, far above the rest
 In joy of voice and pinion !
 Thou, Linnet ! in thy green array,
 Presiding Spirit here to-day,
 Dost lead the revels of the May;
 And this is thy dominion.

10

15

While birds, and butterflies, and flowers
 Make all one band of paramours,
 Thou, ranging up and down the bowers,
 Art sole in thy employment:
 A Life, a Presence like the Air,
 Scattering thy gladness without care,
 Too blest with any one to pair;
 Thyself thy own enjoyment.

20

Amid yon tuft of hazel-trees, 25
 That twinkle to the gusty breeze,
 Behold him perched in ecstasies,
 Yet seeming still to hover;
 There ! where the flutter of his wings
 Upon his back and body flings 30
 Shadows and sunny glimmerings,
 That cover him all over.

My dazzled sight he oft deceives,
 A Brother of the dancing leaves,
 Then flits, and from the cottage-eaves 35
 Pours forth his song in gushes;
 As if by that exulting strain
 He mocked and treated with disdain
 The voiceless Form he chose to feign,
 While fluttering in the bushes. 40

‘ SHE WAS A PHANTOM OF DELIGHT ’

She was a Phantom of delight
 When first she gleamed upon my sight;
 A lovely Apparition, sent
 To be a moment's ornament;
 Her eyes as stars of Twilight fair; 5
 Like Twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
 But all things else about her drawn
 From May-time and the cheerful Dawn—
 A dancing Shape, an Image gay,
 To haunt, to startle, and waylay. 10

This poem describes the poet's feeling for his wife. For other references to her, compare *The Prelude*, vi, l. 224 f. and xiv, l. 268 ..

I saw her upon nearer view,
 A Spirit, yet a Woman too !
 Her household motions light and free,
 And steps of virgin-liberty:
 A countenance in which did meet 15
 Sweet records, promises as sweet;
 A Creature not too bright or good
 For human nature's daily food;
 For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
 Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles. 20

 And now I see with eye serene
 The very pulse of the machine;
 A Being breathing thoughtful breath,
 A Traveller between life and death;
 The reason firm, the temperate will, 25
 Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;
 A perfect Woman, nobly planned,
 To warn, to comfort, and command;
 And yet a Spirit still, and bright
 With something of angelic light. 30

THE SOLITARY REAPER

Behold her, single in the field,
 Yon solitary Highland Lass !
 Reaping and singing by herself;
 Stop here, or gently pass !
 Alone she cuts and binds the grain, 5
 And sings a melancholy strain;

22. **pulse of the machine.** The use of the word "machine" has been much criticized. Explain and comment upon the meaning.

6. **a melancholy strain.** Compare Wilkinson's expression p. 228.

O listen ! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

10

15

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago;
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

20

10. The first reading (1807) was "So sweetly to reposing birds." Wilkinson wrote, "The sweetest human voice," etc.

14. **the Cuckoo-bird.** Wordsworth's references to the Cuckoo are very numerous. In his *Guide to the Lakes* he speaks of "an imaginative influence in the voice of the Cuckoo, when that voice has taken possession of a deep mountain valley." Here we have, instead, the voice referred to as

15. **Breaking the silence of the seas,** which even more exquisitely conveys the poetic charm of solitude. Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" doubtless suggested this line:—

And we did speak only to break

The silence of the sea. (Part ii, stanza 6.)

The literary quality of these stanzas is of the highest.

19. **For old, unhappy, far-off things.** Compare Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal for the day which includes this poem: "William here conceived the notion of writing an ode upon the affecting subject of those relics of human society found in that grand and solitary region."

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang 25
 As if her song could have no ending;
 I saw her singing at her work,
 And o'er the sickle bending;—
 I listened, motionless and still;
 And, as I mounted up the hill, 30
 The music in my heart I bore,
 Long after it was heard no more.

ODE TO DUTY

"Jam non consilio bonus, sed more eductus, ut non tantum rectè facere possim, sed nisi rectè facere non possim."

Stern Daughter of the Voice of God!

O Duty! if that name thou love, •
 Who are a light to guide, a rod
 To check the erring, and reprove;
 Thou, who art victory and law 5
 When empty terrors overawe;
 From vain temptations dost set free;
 And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity!

There are who ask not if thine eye
 Be on them; who, in love and truth, 10
 Where no misgiving is, rely

29. The editions of 1807 and 1815 read as follows:

I listened till I had my fill.

Is the change an improvement?

32. See the note on Wilkinson (p. 228.)

Jam non consilio, etc. "No longer good by resolve, but induced thereto by habit, so that I am able not only to do right, but I am not able to do anything save what is right." Wordsworth inserted this motto in the edition of 1837.

9. **There are who.** There are some who. Compare the Latin construction, *sunt qui*.

Upon the genial sense of youth:
 Glad Hearts ! without reproach or blot;
 Who do thy work, and know it not:
 Oh ! if through confidence misplaced 15
 They fail, thy saving arms, dread Power ! around
 them cast.

Serene will be our days and bright,
 And happy will our nature be,
 When love is an unerring light,
 And joy its own security. 20
 And they a blissful course may hold
 Even now, who, not unwisely bold,
 Live in the spirit of this creed;
 Yet seek thy firm support, according to their need.

I, loving freedom and untried; 25
 No sport of every random gust,
 Yet being to myself a guide,
 Too blindly have reposed my trust:
 And oft, when in my heart was heard
 Thy timely mandate, I deferred 30
 The task, in smoother walks to stray;
 But thee I now would serve more strictly, if I may.

Through no disturbance of my soul,
 Or strong compunction in me wrought,
 I supplicate for thy control; 35
 But in the quietness of thought:
 Me this unchartered freedom tires;
 I feel the weight of chance desires:
 My hopes no more must change their name,
 I long for a repose that ever is the same. 40

33 f. The punctuation offers some difficulty in this stanza.

37. **unchartered.** Unrestricted, a freedom not limited by charter.

Stern lawgiver ! yet thou dost wear
 The Godhead's most benignant grace;
 Nor know we anything so fair
 As is the smile upon thy face:
 Flowers laugh before thee on their beds, 45
 And fragrance in thy footing treads;
 Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
 And the most ancient heavens, through Thee, are
 fresh and strong.

To humbler functions, awful Power!
 I call thee: I myself commend 50
 Unto thy guidance from this hour;
 O, let my weakness have an end !
 Give unto me, made lowly wise,
 The spirit of self-sacrifice;
 The confidence of reason give; 55
 And in the light of truth thy Bondman let me live!

ELEGIAC STANZAS

SUGGESTED BY A PICTURE OF PEELE CASTLE, IN A STORM,
 PAINTED BY SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT.

I was thy neighbor once, thou rugged Pile !
 Four summer weeks I dwelt in sight of thee:
 I saw thee every day; and all the while
 Thy Form was sleeping on a glassy sea.

56. **thy Bondman.** Compare l. 32.

Paraphrase the poem verse by verse to elucidate the meaning.

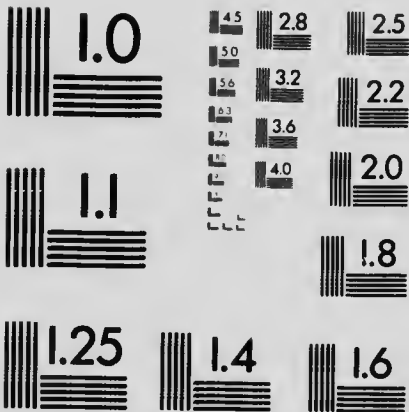
Peele Castle. In Lancashire, south of Barrow-in-Furness.

2. **Four summer weeks.** In 1794 Wordsworth spent part of a summer vacation at the house of his cousin, Mr. Barker, at Rampside, a village near Peele Castle.



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So pure the sky, so quiet was the air !
 So like, so very like, was day to day !
 Whene'er I looked, thy Image still was there;
 It trembled, but it never passed away.

5

How perfect was the calm ! it seemed no sleep;
 No mood, which season takes away, or brings:
 I could have fancied that the mighty Deep
 Was even the gentlest of all gentle Things.

10

Ah ! THEN, if mine had been the Painter's hand,
 To express what then I saw; and add the gleam,
 The light that never was, on sea or land,
 The consecration. and the Poet's dream;

15

I would have planted thee, thou hoary Pile,
 Amid a world how different from this !
 Beside a sea that could not cease to smile;
 On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss.

20

6-7. Shelley has twice imitated these lines. Compare:—

Within the surface of Time's fleeting river
 Its wrinkled Image lies, as then it lay
 Immovably unquiet, and for ever
 It trembles, but it cannot pass away.

Ode to Liberty, vi.

also the following :

Within the surface of the fleeting river
 The wrinkled image of the city lay,
 Immovably unquiet, and for ever
 It trembles, but it never fades away.

Evening.

9-10. The calm was so complete that it did not seem a transient mood of the sea, a passing sleep.

13-16. Compare with the above original reading of 1807 (restored after 1827) the lines which Wordsworth substituted in 1820 and 1827.

Ah ! THEN, if mine had been the Painter's hand,
 To express what then I saw ; and add a gleam,
 The lustre, known to neither sea nor land,
 But borrowed from the youthful Poet's dream.

Thou shouldst have seemed a treasure-house divine
 Of peaceful years; a chronicle of heaven;—
 Of all the sunbeams that did ever shine
 The very sweetest had to thee been given.

A Picture had it been of lasting ease, 25
 Elysian quiet, without toil or strife;
 No motion but the moving tide, a breeze,
 Or merely silent Nature's breathing life.

Such, in the fond illusion of my heart,
 Such Picture would I at that time have made: 30
 And seen the soul of truth in every part,
 A steadfast peace that might not be betrayed.

So once it would have been,—'tis so no more;
 I have submitted to a new control:
 A power is gone, which nothing can restore; 35
 A deep distress hath humanized my Soul.

Not for a moment could I now behold
 A smiling sea, and be what I have been:
 The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old;
 This, which I know, I speak with mind serene. 40

Then, Beaumont, Friend! who would have been the
 Friend,

If he had lived, of Him whom I deplore,
 This work of thine I blame not, but commend;
 This sea in anger, and that dismal shore.

O 'tis a passionate Work!—yet wise and well, 45
 Well chosen is the spirit that is here;

35-36. **A power is gone—Soul.** The reference is to the death at sea of his brother Captain John Wordsworth. The poet can no longer see things wholly idealized. His brother's death has revealed to him, however, the ennobling virtue of grief. Thus a personal loss is converted into human gain. Note especially in this connection l. 35 and ll. 53-60.

That Hulk which labors in the deadly swell,
This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear!

And this huge Castle, standing here sublime,
I love to see the look with which it braves, 50
Cased in the unfeeling armor of old time,
The lightning, the fierce wind, and trampling waves.

Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,
Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!
Such happiness, wherever it be known, 55
Is to be pitied: for 'tis surely blind.

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,
And frequent sights of what is to be borne!
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here.—
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn. 60

SEPTEMBER, 1819

The sylvan slopes with corn-clad fields
Are hung, as if with golden shields,
Bright trophies of the sun!
Like a fair sister of the sky,
Unruffled doth the blue lake lie, 5
The mountains looking on.

And, sooth to say, yon vocal grove,
Albeit uninspired by love,
By love untaught to ring,
May well afford to mortal ear 10

54. **from the Kind.** From our fellow-beings.

7. **vocal grove.** Filled with the music of birds.

5-6. *Cf. Byron in Isles of Greece:*

"The mountains look on Marathon
And Marathon looks on the sea."

8-9. The birds are not mating now.

An impulse more profoundly dear
Than music of the Spring.

For *that* from turbulence and heat
Proceeds, from some uneasy seat
In nature's struggling frame,
Some region of impatient life:
And jealousy, and quivering strife,
Therein a portion claim.

15

This, this is holy;—while I hear
These vespers of another year,
This hymn of thanks and praise,
My spirit seems to mount above
The anxieties of human love,
And earth's precarious days.

20

But list!—though winter storms be nigh,
Unchecked is that soft harmony:
There lives Who can provide
For all his creatures; and in Him,
Even like the radiant Seraphim,
These choristers confide.

25

30

UPON THE SAME OCCASION

Departing summer hath assumed
An aspect tenderly illumed,
The gentlest look of spring;
That calls from yonder leafy shade
Unfaded, yet prepared to fade,
A timely carolling.

5

14. *seat*. Condition.

5. Note the fineness of perception in this line.

No faint and hesitating trill,
 Such tribute as to winter chill
 The lonely redbreast pays !
 Clear, loud, and lively is the din, 10
 From social warblers gathering in
 Their harvest of sweet lays.

Nor doth the example fail to cheer
 Me, conscious that my leaf is sere,
 And yellow on the bough:— 15
 Fall, rosy garlands, from my head !
 Ye myrtle wreaths, your fragrance shed
 Around a younger brow !

Yet will I temperately rejoice;
 Wide is the range, and free the choice 20
 Of undiscordant themes;
 Which, haply, kindred souls may prize
 Not less than vernal ecstasies,
 And passion's feverish dreams.

For deathless powers to verse belong, 25
 And they like Demi-gods are strong
 On whom the Muses smile;
 But some their function have disclaimed,
 Best pleased with what is aptliest framed
 To enervate and defile. 30

7. Is there an ellipsis here? or is the line appositional?

14-15. Compare Shakespeare's lines in *Macbeth*, v, 3:
 "My way of life
 Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf."

27. **the Muses smile.** The Muses were nine in number, and were supposed to preside over poetry, music, dancing, and all the liberal arts.

30. Scan this line Wordsworth refers scathingly to the corruption of modern poetry.

Not such the initiatory strains
 Committed to the silent plains
 In Britain's earliest dawn:
 Trembled the groves, the stars grew pale,
 While all-too-daringly the veil 35
 Of nature was withdrawn!

Nor such the spirit-stirring note
 When the live chords Alcæus smote,
 Inflamed by sense of wrong;
 Woe! woe to Tyrants! from the lyre 40
 Broke threateningly, in sparkles dire
 Of fierce vindictive song.

And not unhallowed was the page
 By wingèd Love inscribed, to assuage
 The pangs of vain pursuit; 45
 Love listening while the Lesbian Maid
 With finest touch of passion swayed
 Her own Æolian lute.

O ye, who patiently explore
 The wreck of Herculanean lore, 50

31-36. Wordsworth implies that the Druids were the earliest poets of Britain.

38. **Alcæus.** A lyric poet of Mitylene, in the island of Lesbos, about 600 B.C. He was a contemporary of Sappho (see l. 46), and the inventor of the alcaic verse.

46. **the Lesbian Maid.** Sappho, born in the island of Lesbos about 600 B.C. Her poetry was extremely emotional, and was highly esteemed by the ancients. But two or three fragments now remain. She is said to have hurled herself into the sea from Mount Leucas owing to unrequited love.

48. **Æolian lute.** Sappho's birth place, Lesbos, was in Æolia.

50. **Herculanean lore.** Herculaneum was engulfed with Pompeii in the famous eruption from Mt. Vesuvius in A.D. 79. The town was unearthed in 1709, about 24 feet underground, by workmen digging for a well. Many manuscripts were later discovered in the ruins.

What rapture ! could ye seize
 Some Theban fragment, or unroll
 One precious, tender-hearted scroll
 Of pure Simonides.

That were, indeed, a genuine birth 55
 Of poesy; a bursting forth
 Of genius from the dust:
 What Horace gloried to behold,
 What Maro loved, shall we enfold?
 Can haughty Time be just? 60

TO THE REV. DR. WORDSWORTH

(WITH THE SONNETS TO THE RIVER DUDDON, AND OTHER
 POEMS IN THIS COLLECTION, 1820).

The minstrels played their Christmas tune
 To-night beneath my cottage-eaves;
 While, smitten by a lofty moon,
 The encircling laurels, thick with leaves,
 Gave back a rich and dazzling sheen, 5
 That overpowered their natural green.
 Through hill and valley every breeze
 Had sunk to rest with folded wings:

52. **Some Theban fragment.** The reference is to Pindar, the famous Theban poet. His "Olympic Odes" were his most famous production. He died about 435 B.C.

54. **Simonides.** A celebrated poet of Ceos. Some fragments of his poetry are extant. He died about 500 B.C.

55-60. Such discoveries would bring us a wealth of genuine poetry. Will Time ever be good enough to restore to us what Horace and Vergil (Maro) loved?

58. **Horace.** A famous Roman poet, the author of Odes, Satires, and Epistles. He died in 8 B.C.

59. **Maro.** Vergil's full name was Publius Vergilius Maro. He died in 19 B.C.

Keen was the air, but could not freeze,
 Nor check, the music of the strings; 10
 So stout and hardy were the band
 That scraped the chords with strenuous hand:

And who but listened?—till was paid
 Respect to every Inmate's claim:
 The greeting given, the music played, 15
 In honor of each household name,
 Duly pronounced with lusty call,
 And "Merry Christmas" wished to all !

O Brother ! I revere the choice
 That took thee from thy native hills; 20
 And it is given thee to rejoice:
 Though public care full often tills
 (Heaven only witness of the toil)
 A barren and ungrateful soil.

• Yet, would that Thou, with me and mine, 25
 Hadst heard this never-failing rite;
 And so many other faces shine
 A true gleam of the light
 Which Nature and these rustic Powers,
 In simple childhood, spread through ours ! 30

For pleasure hath not ceased to wait
 On these expected annual rounds;
 Whether the rich man's sumptuous gate
 Call forth the unelaborate sounds,
 Or they are offered at the door 35
 That guards the lowliest of the poor.

15. **The greeting given, the music played.** Till the greeting had been given and the music played.

17. Attributive to "name" (l. 16.)

18. Explain the construction of "wished."

How touching, when, at midnight, sweep
 Snow-muffled winds, and all is dark,
 To hear—and sink again to sleep!
 Or, at an earlier call, to mark,
 By blazing fire, the still suspense
 Of self-complacent innocence;

The mutual nod,—the grave disguise
 Of hearts with gladness brimming o'er;
 And some unbidden tears that rise
 For names once heard, and heard no more;
 Tears brightened by the serenade
 For infant in the cradle laid.

Ah! not for emerald fields alone,
 With ambient streams more pure and bright
 Than fabled Cytherea's zone
 Glittering before the Thunderer's sight,
 Is to my heart of hearts endeared
 The ground where we were born and reared!

Hail, ancient Manners! sure defence,
 Where they survive, of wholesome laws;
 Remnants of love whose modest sense
 Thus into narrow room withdraws;

50. **ambient** = *winding*.

51. **Cytherea's zone**. The goddess Venus was named Cytherea because she was supposed to have been born of the foam of the sea near Cythera, an island off the coast of the Peloponnesus. Venus was the goddess of love, and her power over the heart was strengthened by the marvellous zone or girdle she wore.

52. **the Thunderer**. The reference is to Jupiter, who is generally represented as seated upon a golden or ivory throne holding in one hand the thunderbolts, and in the other a sceptre of cypress.

55-60. Suggest how this stanza is characteristic of Wordsworth.

Hail, Usages of pristine mould,
And ye that guard them, Mountains old ! 60

Bear with me, Brother ! quench the thought
That slights this passion, or condemns;
If thee fond Fancy ever brought
From the proud margin of the Thames,
And Lambeth's venerable towers, 65
To humbler streams, and greener bowers.

Yes, they can make, who fail to fill
Short leisure even in busiest days;
Moments, to cast a look behind,
And profit by those kindly rays 70
That through the clouds do sometimes steal,
And all the far-off past reveal.

Hence, while the imperial City's din
Beats frequent on thy satiate ear,
A pleased attention I may win 75
To agitations less severe,
That neither overwhelm nor cloy,
But fill the hollow vale with joy !

TO A SKYLARK

Ethereal minstrel ! pilgrim of the sky !
Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound ?

65. **Lambeth's venerable towers.** :. Lambeth Palace, the official residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, is on the Thames. Wordsworth's brother Christopher, afterwards Master of Trinity College, was then (1820) Rector of Lambeth.

2. **despise the earth.** The derivative meaning of "despise," Lat. *despicere*, is "to look down upon." Compare Shelley's *To a Skylark*, st. xx.

"Thou scorner of the ground."

Or, while the wings aspire, are heart and eye
 Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground?
 Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will, 5
 Those quivering wings composed, that music still!

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood;
 A privacy of glorious light is thine;
 Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
 Of harmony, with instinct more divine; 10
 Type of the wise who soar, but never roam;
 True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home!

BY THE SEA-SIDE, NEAR CALAIS

Fair Star of evening, Splendor of the west,
 Star of my Country!—on the horizon's brink
 Thou hangest, stooping, as might seem, to sink
 On England's bosom; yet well pleased to rest 5
 Meanwhile, and be to her a glorious crest
 Conspicuous to the Nations. Thou, I think,
 Should'st be my Country's emblem; and should'st wink,
 Bright Star! with laughter on her banners, drest
 In thy fresh beauty. There! that dusky spot 10
 Beneath thee, that is England; there she lies.
 Blessings be on you both! one hope, one lot,
 One life, one glory!—I, with many a fear
 For my dear Country, many heartfelt sighs,
 Among men who do not love her, linger here.

3-4. Compare Hogg's *Skylark*, l. 10-12.

"Where on thy dewy wing

Where art thou journeying?

Thy lay is in heaven, thy love is on earth."

6. **Those quivering wings**, etc. The construction is absolute.

8. Compare again Shelley's *Skylark*, st, viii:

"Like a poet hidden

In the light of thought."

COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE

SEPT. 3, 1802.

Earth has not anything to show more fair;
 Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
 A sight so touching in its majesty:
 This City now doth, like a garment, wear
 The beauty of the morning; silent, bare, 5
 Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
 Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
 All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
 Never did sun more beautifully steep
 In his first splendor, valley, rock, or hill; 10
 Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
 The river glideth at his own sweet will:
 Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
 And all that mighty heart is lying still!

"WHEN I HAVE BORNE IN MEMORY"

When I have borne in memory what has tamed
 Great Nations, how ennobling thoughts depart
 When men change swords for ledgers, and desert
 The student's bower for gold, some fears unnailed
 I had, my Country!—am I to be blamed? 5
 Now, when I think of thee, and what thou art,
 Verily, in the bottom of my heart,
 Of those unfilial fears I am ashamed.
 For dearly must we prize thee; we who find
 In thee a bulwark for the cause of men; 10
 And I by my affection was beguiled:
 What wonder if a Poet now and then,
 Among the many movements of his mind,
 Felt for thee as a lover or a child!

"IT IS NOT TO BE THOUGHT OF"

It is not to be thought of that the Flood
 Of British freedom, which to the open sea
 Of the world's praise from dark antiquity
 Hath flowed, 'with pomp of waters, unwithstood,'
 Roused though it be full often to a mood 5
 Which spurns the check of salutary bands,
 That this most famous Stream in bogs and sands
 Should perish, and to evil and to good
 Be lost forever. In our halls is hung
 Armoury of the invincible Knights of old: 10
 We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
 That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold
 Which Milton held.—In everything we are sprung
 Of Earth's first blood, have titles manifold.

WRITTEN IN LONDON, SEPTEMBER, 1802

O Friend! I know not which way I must look
 For comfort, being, as I am, oppressed,
 To think that now our life is only dressed
 For show; mean handiwork of craftsman, cook,
 Or groom!—We must run glittering like a brook 5
 In the open sunshine, or we are unblessed:
 The wealthiest man among us is the best:
 No grandeur now in nature or in book
 Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
 This is idolatry; and these we adore: 10

4. 'with pomp of waters, unwithstood.' This is quoted from Daniel's *Civil War*, Bk. ii, stanza 7.

Plain living and high thinking are no more:
The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence,
And pure religion breathing household laws.

LONDON, 1802

Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee: she is a fen
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower 5
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea: 10
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

TO SLEEP

A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by,
One after one; the sound of rain, and bees
Murmuring; the fall of rivers, winds and seas,
Smooth fields, white sheets of water, and pure sky;
I have thought of all by turns, and yet do lie 5
Sleepless! and soon the small birds' melodies
Must hear, first uttered from my orchard trees;
And the first cuckoo's melancholy cry.
Even thus last night, and two nights more, I lay,

And could not win thee, Sleep ! by any stealth: 10
 So do not let me wear to-night away:
 Without Thee what is all the morning's wealth?
 Come, blessed barrier between day and day,
 Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health !

BROOK ! WHOSE SOCIETY

Brook ! whose society the Poet seeks,
 Intent his wasted spirits to renew;
 And whom the curious Painter doth pursue
 Through rocky passes, among flowery creeks,
 And tracks thee dancing down thy waterbreaks; 5
 If wish were mine some type of thee to view,
 Thee, and not thee thyself, I would not do
 Like Grecian Artists, give thee human cheeks,
 Channels for tears; no Naiad should'st thou be,—
 Have neither limbs, feet, feathers, joints nor hairs: 10
 It seems the Eternal Soul is clothed in thee
 With purer robes than those of flesh and blood,
 And hath bestowed on thee a safer good;
 Unwearied joy, and life without its cares.

ON THE SUBJUGATION OF SWITZERLAND

Two Voices are there; one is of the sea,
 One of the mountains; each a mighty Voice:
 In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,
 They were thy chosen music, Liberty !

ON THE SUBJUGATION OF SWITZERLAND. Napoleon had in 1803 reduced Switzerland to a virtual dependency of France.

1-4. **Two Voices are there—Liberty.** Liberty has always found her strongholds among the mountains, or upon the open sea.

There came a Tyrant, and with holy glee 5
 Thou fought'st against him; but hast vainly striven:
 Thou from thy Alpine holds at length art driven,
 Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.
 Of one deep bliss thine ear hath been bereft:
 Then cleave, O cleave to that which still is left; 10
 For, high-souled Maid, what sorrow would it be
 That Mountain floods should thunder as before,
 And Ocean bellow from his rocky shore,
 And neither awful Voice be heard by thee!

INSIDE OF KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL,
 CAMBRIDGE

Tax not the royal Saint with vain expense,
 With ill-matched aims the Architect who planned—
 Albeit laboring for a scanty band
 Of white-robed Scholars only—this immense
 And glorious Work of fine intelligence! 5

5. **There came a Tyrant.** Napoleon I.
6. **Thou.** sc. Liberty.
7. **holds** = *strongholds*.
8. The Alpine torrents murmur still, but Liberty has been driven away.
10. England is still the home of Liberty.
11. **high-souled Maid.** The poet addresses Liberty throughout the sonnet.
- 11-14. Napoleon never abandoned the idea of invading England.
1. **Tax not** = *blame not*.
- the royal Saint.** Henry VI. founded the chapel in 1441. It was finished in 1527 under Henry VII.
2. Supply an ellipsis.
- With ill-matched aims.** Such a sumptuous design for twelve surpliced scholars only.

Give all thou canst; high Heaven rejects the lore
 Of nicely-calculated less or more;
 So deemed the man who fashioned for the sense
 These lofty pillars, spread that branching roof,
 Self-poised and scooped into ten thousand cells, 10
 Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
 Linger—*and wandering on as loath to die;*
 Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
 That they were born for immortality.

CONTINUED

They dreamt not of a perishable home
 Who thus could build. Be mine, in hours of fear
 Or grovelling thought, to seek a refuge here;
 Or through the aisles of Westminster to roam:
 Where bubbles burst, and folly's dancing foam 5
 Melts, if it cross the threshold; where the wreath
 Of awe-struck wisdom droops: or let my path
 Lead to that younger Pile, whose sky-like dome

6-7. In works of love and piety, as in works of beauty, we should not grudge a generous outlay, but should give to the fullness of our power.

lore=*teaching, doctrine, principle.*

9. **These lofty pillars.** There are no actual pillars. The buttresses of the walls have the appearance from within of pillars.

that branching roof. The roof is of stone delicately carved.

10. **Self-poised.** The roof depends upon the buttresses of the walls alone. There are no supporting pillars along the aisles.

scooped into ten thousand cells. The hollows of the carvings.

8. **that younger Pile.** St. Paul's Cathedral, London. Westminster was begun in the 13th century. St. Paul's was built in 1675.

whose sky-like dome. Imitated from the Oriental dome of St. Peter's, Rome.

Hath typified by reach of daring art
 Infinity's embrace; whose guardian crest,
 The silent Cross, among the stars shall spread
 As now, when She hath also seen her breast
 Filled with mementos, satiate with its part
 Of grateful England's overflowing Dead.

10

"SCORN NOT THE SONNET"

Scorn not the Sonnet; Critic, you have frowned,
 Mindless of its just honors; with this key
 Shakespeare unlocked his heart; the melody
 Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound;
 A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound;
 With it Camoëns soothed an exile's grief;
 The Sonnet glittered a gay myrtle leaf
 Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned
 His visionary brow: a glow-worm lamp,

5

8-10. The dome simulates the arched sky, and thus may be said to typify infinity.

11. **The silent Cross.** The emblem of Christianity.

12-14. St. Paul's is still less crowded than Westminster with the illustrious of "England's overflowing Dead."

3. **Shakespeare unlocked his heart.** This is disputed. Many critics hold that Shakespeare's sonnets are almost entirely fanciful.

4. **Petrarch's wound.** His unfortunate attachment to the Laura whom he celebrates in his sonnets. Petrarch was a great Italian poet of the Renaissance; he was born in 1304, and died in 1374.

5. **Tasso.** 1544-1595. An Italian poet of great genius, but of unbalanced mind. Famous as the author of "Jerusalem Delivered."

6. **Camoëns.** 1524-1580. The lyric poet of Portugal, and author of "The Lusiad."

8. **Dante.** 1265-1321. An Italian, and one of the great poets of the world. His great work is the "Divine Comedy."

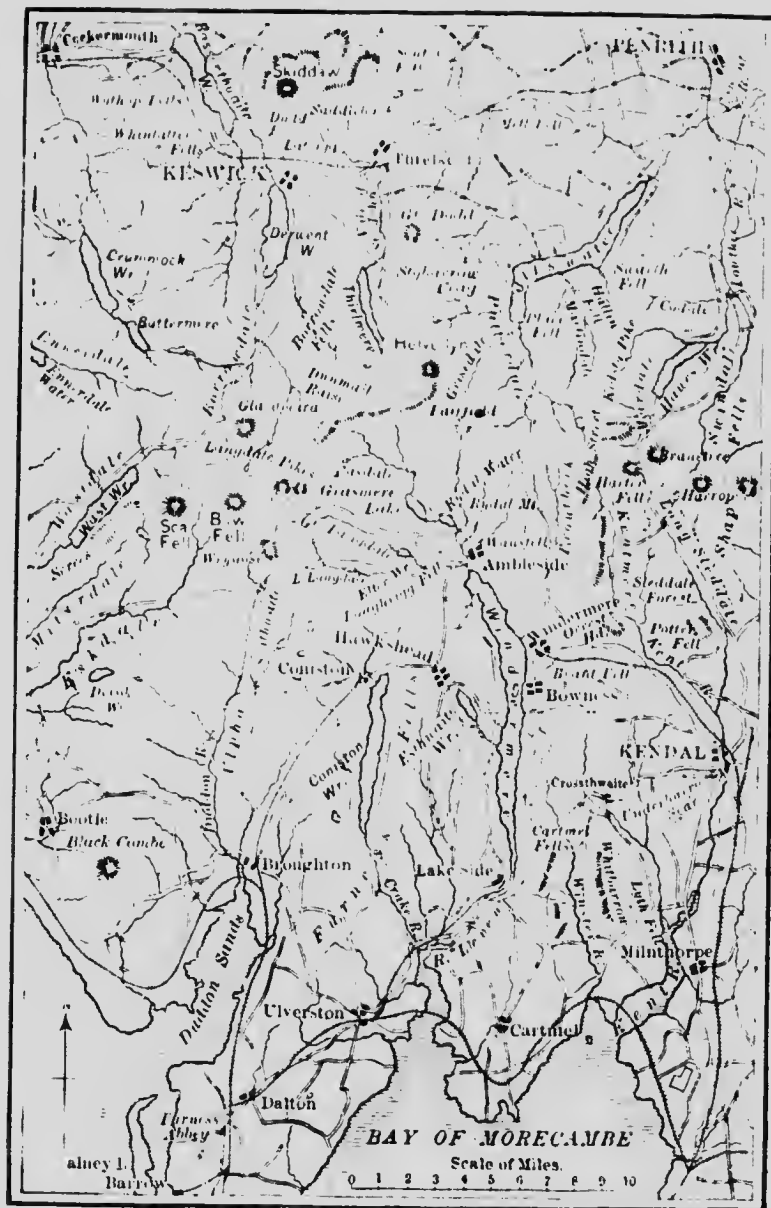
It cheered mild Spenser, called from Faeryland
To struggle through dark ways; and, when a damp
Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
The Thing became a trumpet; whence he blew
Soul-animating strains—alas, too few!

10

10. **Spenser.** Edmund Spenser, the author of the "Faerie Queene," was born in 1552, and died in 1599. His influence has been very marked upon English poetry.

mp

' Faerie
nce has



MAP OF THE LAKE COUNTRY

By permission of the American Book Co.

NOTES
ON THE TEXT OF COLERIDGE AND WORDSWORTH



NOTES

ON THE TEXT OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

THE system of teaching which employs a beautiful poem primarily as a basis for a lesson in etymology is to be deprecated. The object of the editor has been to discuss only words of peculiar interest or of importance in the text. Elsewhere reference may be made to our excellent modern dictionaries—*The Century Dictionary*, whose derivations are very reliable, and Murray's still incomplete *New English Dictionary*.

PART I

The struggle of the Wedding-Guest against the overmastering influence of the Mariner is here depicted, and the ultimate surrender to his magnetic sway. Sounds from the outer world obtrude themselves in the opening stanzas, but before the close they fall idly on the ears of the Wedding-Guest. The spell of the weird story is upon him. An exquisite poetic effect is gained in lines 30 f. by the image of the bride as she paced into the hall; but the spell remains unbroken. It will be observed that the interruptions of the Wedding-Guest at the outset are impatient, and for the purpose of thwarting the narrative. The interruptions which follow are the result of fear and fascination.

We need not spoil the simple beauty of the poem by the premature intrusion of philosophical interpretations. Let the student first read the poem for the delight in reading it, and when the hour for reflection comes an added pleasure will doubtless accrue, for some minds at least, from the discovery of hidden spiritual meanings, even at the risk of making the poem more difficult than it was meant to be. For a brief discussion of this question of philosophical significance, see opening note to Part VII.

1. **ancient.** The word usually suggests time long past. In the poem the action probably relates to a remote period, but the

word itself here rather refers to the advanced age of the narrator — the Old Navigator, as Coleridge loved to call him. "It was a delicate thought to put the weird tale, not into the author's own mouth, but into that of an ancient mariner, who relates it with dreamy recollection." — Brandl, page 202.

2. **one of three.** Three and seven are mystic numbers, and seem for that reason adopted throughout the poem; e. g.:

"And listens like a three years' child." (Line 15.)

"Quoth she, and whistles thrice." (Line 198.)

"Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse." (Line 261.)

3. **By thy long gray beard.** Observe the art of this indirect description involved in the progress of the narrative. Compare other instances of personal description in the poem, especially lines 79 f., where the agony on the Mariner's face is reflected in the terrified words of the Wedding-Guest. The custom of swearing by the beard is not uncommon in old literature.

Touch. "Swear by your beards that I am a knave.

Cel. By our beards, if we had them, thou art."

Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, I, ii.

11. **loon.** Not to be confused with *loon* (a corruption of *loom*), the name of an aquatic bird. This is the explanation usually given. Our present word is Middle English *lowne*, meaning "a stupid fellow." Cf.

"The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon!"

Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, V, iii.

13. **He holds him,** etc. Observe the repetition of the phrase, *He holds him*, from line 9, and notice the constant effective repetitions throughout. Repetition is extremely common in ballad literature, but even in other poems than *The Ancient Mariner* it had developed into a mannerism with Coleridge. Compare also Edgar Allan Poe.

21 f. For the joyousness of a ship's departure compare Tennyson's *The Voyage*.

The evolution of Coleridge's poem is very perfect. In line 465 the return to the old familiar landmarks brings joy to the old man's heart:

"Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed

The light-house top I see?

Is this the hill? is this the kirk?

Is this mine own countree?"

23. **kirk.** This is the northern form still surviving in Scotland of the Anglo-Saxon *cyric*, which became *church* in Midland and Southern English. It is significant, in view of the occasional touches of Northern dialect in *The Ancient Mariner*, to note that the borderland was the primitive home of the ballad. "There is scarcely an old historical song or ballad, wherein a minstrel or harper appears, but he is characterized by way of eminence to have been 'of the north country.'"—Percy, *Essay on the Ancient Minstrelsy*.

25 f. Note the naked simplicity of this description. Lowell has very ably analyzed the charm of Coleridge's descriptions in the following passage, the excellence of which is an excuse for its length: "Coleridge has taken the old ballad measure and given to it, by an indefinable charm wholly his own, all the sweetness, all the melody and compass of a symphony. And how picturesque it is in the proper sense of the word. I know nothing like it. There is not a description in it. It is all picture. Descriptive poets generally confuse us with multiplicity of detail; we can not see their forest for the trees; but Coleridge never errs in this way. With instinctive tact he touches the right chord of association, and is satisfied, as we also are. I should find it hard to explain the singular charm of his diction, there is so much nicety of art and purpose in it, whether for music or meaning. Nor does it need any explanation, for we all feel it. The words seem common words enough, but in the order of them, in the choice, variety, and position of the vowel sounds, they become magical. The most decrepit vocable in the language throws away its crutches to dance and sing at his piping. I can not think it a personal peculiarity, but a matter of universal experience, that more bits of Coleridge have imbedded themselves in my memory than of any other poet who delighted my youth—unless I should except the sonnets of Shakespeare. This argues perfectness of expression. Let me cite an example or two:

'The Sun's rim dips, the stars rush out,
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper o'er the sea
Off shot the spectre barque.'

Or take this as a bit of landscape:

'Beneath yon birch with silver bark
And boughs so pendulous and fair,

The brook falls scattered down the rock,
And all is mossy there.' •

It is a perfect little picture, and seems so easily done. But try to do something like it. Coleridge's words have the unashamed nakedness of Scripture, of the Eden of diction ere the voluble serpent had entered it. This felicity of speech in Coleridge's best verse is the more remarkable because it was an acquisition. His earlier poems are apt to be turgid; in his prose there is too often a languor of profuseness, and there are pages where he seems to be talking to himself and not to us, as I have heard a guide do in the tortuous caverns of the Catacombs when he was doubtful if he had not lost his way. But when his genius runs freely and full in his prose, the style, as he said of Pascal, 'is a garment of light.' He knew all our best prose and knew the secret of its composition. When he is well inspired, as in his best poetry he commonly is, he gives us the very quintessence of perception, the clearly crystallized precipitation of all that is most precious in the ferment of impression after the impertinent and obtrusive particulars have evaporated from the memory. It is the pure visual ecstasy disengaged from the confused and confusing material that gave it birth. It seems the very beatitude of artless simplicity, and is the most finished product of art. I know nothing so perfect in its kind since Dante."—Lowell, *Works*, vol. vi, pp. 74, 75.

Coleridge's power as a descriptive poet is touched upon elsewhere (see pages 47 f.). Simplicity is everywhere its prevailing quality, and an effort should be made to impress this upon the student by textual reference. In this stanza the loneliness which suddenly enveloped the ship is impressively conveyed.

32. the loud bassoon. Mr. Dykes Campbell has the following note on this: "During Coleridge's residence at Stowey his friend Poole reformed the church choir, and added a bassoon to its resources. Mrs. Sanford (*T. Poole and his Friends*, i, 247) happily suggests that this 'was the very original and prototype of the *loud bassoon* whose sound moved the Wedding-Guest to beat his breast.'"

34. Red as a rose. A common comparison in ballads, where alliterative similes and expressions are very frequent; e.g., "green as . . . glass," *Lin.*, 10; "green as . . . grass," *Maur.*, 7. Cf. also,

"Her cheeks were like the roses red."

Dowsabell, line 92 (Percy's *Reliques*).

"His lippes reed as rose."

Chaucer, *The Tale of Sir Thopas*.

51-70. **And now there came**, etc. Mr. Ivor James in the *Athenæum* for March 15, 1890, quotes a number of parallels from Captain James's *Northwest Passage*, as a proof that Coleridge drew some of his descriptions from that source (see also Dykes Campbell, *Coleridge's Works*, page 597).

62. **Like noises in a swound**. So (except *of* for *in*) in the 1798 edition. In 1800 the reading was,

"A wild and ceaseless sound."

The earlier reading was properly restored. The comparison of these muffled noises to the sound of the pulsing arteries in a condition of syncope is very expressive.—**swound**. Derived from *swoun* with excrescent *d*. Compare the "*d*" in *sound*, *round*.

67. **It ate the food it ne'er had eat**. The 1798 edition reads :

"The Mariners gave it biscuit-worms."

Do you consider the revised text the better reading?

PART II.

The gloss forms a sufficient commentary upon the progress of the story in this second part. The crime is accomplished, the wanton slaying of a harmless creature, and retribution follows swift behind. The Mariner is first blamed by his comrades, but when a fair breeze rises to speed them on their northward voyage they approve the deed, and thus become accomplices in crime. The fifth stanza is remarkable. The sudden stagnation that checks the ship's exultant speed offers a wonderful poetic contrast. Nothing could excel in its kind the description which follows.

87. **And the good south wind**. Cf. lines 91 and 92 for the use of "and" as an introductory word. It is a peculiarity of ballad diction; e. g. :

"And he cast a lease upon his backe,
And he rode to the silver wood,

And there he sought all about,
About the silver wood," etc.

Childe Maurice, Gummere, page 192.

92. 'em is not really a contraction of *them*, but a survival of Middle English *hem*, Anglo-Saxon *heom*, the dative plural of the third personal pronoun.

95 and 96, which balance lines 101 and 102, were not in the early editions.

104. **The furrow followed free.** Mr. Dykes Campbell has the following note upon this line: "In *Sibylline Leaves* the line was printed,

'The furrow streamed off free.'

And Coleridge put this footnote, 'In the former edition the line was,

'The furrow follow'd free.'

But I had not been long on board a ship before I perceived that this was the image as seen by a spectator from the shore, or from another vessel. From the ship itself the *wake* appears like a brook flowing off from the stern.' But in 1828 and after, the old line was restored." Justify your preference for either line.

117-118. The image contained in these lines is deservedly famous.

123-130. **The very deep did rot**, etc. This, with some allowance for poetic exaggeration, fairly accurately represents the condition of the sea in the tropics after a prolonged calm.

An earlier poem of Coleridge's contains lines which suggest line 125:

"What time after long and pestful calms,
With slimy shapes and miscreated life
Poisoning the vast Pacific"

Coleridge, *The Destiny of Nations*.

127. **About, about**, etc. There seems to be a hint in this passage of the witches' song in *Macbeth*:

"The weird sisters, hand in hand,
Posters of the sea and land,
Thus do go about, about."

Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, I, iii, 32 f.

128. **The death-fires.** "Among the superstitious this name, as also *corpse candles*, *dead men's candles* and *fetch-lights*, was given to certain phosphorescent lights that appeared to issue

from houses or arise from the ground. It was believed that they foretold death, and that the course they took marked out the road the dead body was to be carried for burial," etc.—Charlotte Latham, *Folk-lore Record*.

129. **like a witch's oils.** Oil used in incantations was mingled, in order to make the scene more impressive, with substances which produced a colored flame.

139. **well-a-day.** Altered by analogy with "day," from *welaway*, Middle English *welaway*, Anglo-Saxon *wa lā wā*, an exclamation of distress, *wā*, woe; *lā*, lo; *wā*, woe. It is a very common ballad expression.

The Gloss. 131 f. **Josephus**, A.D. 37-100 (?). A celebrated Jewish historian. At the outbreak of the Judeo-Roman war he was appointed Governor of Galilee, and took an active part in the war. He afterwards entered into the service of the Emperors Vespasian and Titus. In Rome he composed the *History of the Jewish War*, in seven books, and also *The Antiquities of the Jews*.

Psellus, 1020-1110 (?), was born in Constantinople, where he was called the "Prince of Philosophers." His works are numerous, consisting of commentaries on Aristotle and treatises on the occult sciences. Coleridge has reference to his *Dialogue on the Operation of Demons*.

PART III.

The marvels accumulate in this third part, but, like the Wedding-Guest, we "can not choose but hear." The intensity with which the poet depicts the supernatural brings it vividly before our imagination, and "by sheer vividness of imagery, and terse vigor of descriptive phrase," he obtains our imaginative assent to the weird details of the narrative. We believe because we see.

113. **There passed**, etc. This third part has been subjected to the most conscientious and successful revision on the poet's part.

What is the special value of the repetition in the present text?

152. **I wist.** This has the appearance of being an archaic preterite from the preterite present verb *wit*, M. E. *witen*, A.-S. *witan*, to know; but it is more probably a corruption of A.-S.

gewiss, certainly, indeed, M. E. *ywiss*, *i-wiss*, which became *I wist* by confusion with the above preterite.

161 **A sail! a sail!** This ship suggests the famous "Flying Dutchman." "The original story is that of a Dutch captain who swore he would round Cape Horn against a head gale. The storm increased; he swore the louder; threw overboard those who tried to dissuade him; cursed God, and was condemned to sail on forever, without hope of port or respite."—Sykes.

164 **they for joy did grin.** "I took the thought of 'grinning for joy' from my companion's [Berdmore, of Jesus College, Cambridge] remark to me when we had climbed to the top of Plinlimmon, and were nearly dead with thirst. We could not speak, from the constriction, till we found a little puddle under a stone. He said to me, 'You grinned like an idiot!' He had done the same!"—*Table Talk*, May 13, 1830 (second edition).

178. **(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)** An imitation of old ballad refrains. These refrains were of different kinds, sometimes being quite meaningless and of the nature of a burden merely to mark time, as *Hey derry down, olilly lally*, etc. Sometimes again the words are articulate, but strung together with no apparent sense, as, for example, in *Riddles Wisely Expounded*:

"There was a Knight riding frae the east—

Jennifer gentle and rosemarie —

Who had been wooing at monie a place—

As the dew flies over the mulberry tree."

And finally the refrain has sometimes more or less reference to the story as in *The Two Sisters*:

"He has ta'en three locks o' her yellow hair—

Binnorie, O Binnorie—

And wi' them strung his harp sae rare—

By the bonnie mill-dams of Binnorie."

Modern balladists have employed both the articulate and the meaningless refrain. As for the former, cf. Tennyson in *The Sisters*:

"We were two sisters of one race,
The wind is howling in turret and tree;
She was the fairer in the face,
O! the Earl was fair to see."

Jean Ingelow, and Rossetti in *Sister Helen*, *Troy Town*, *Eden Bower*, have by preference employed the latter, an affectation cleverly parodied by the late Mr. C. S. Calverley:

"The auld wife sat at her ivied door
 (Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese),
 A thing she had frequently done before;
 And her spectacles lay on her aproned knees.

"The farmer's daughter hath soft brown hair.
 (Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese).
 And I met with a ballad, I can't say where,
 Which wholly consisted of lines like these."

179, 180. Note the graphic force of the simile here. The stanza begins with a metaphorical allusion. Still, we are so accustomed to the term "bars," as applied to level lines of clouds, that the metaphor passes as a plain statement. The idea of bars, by the principle of association which is at the bottom of all great poetry, suggested the image of a dungeon grate, which by the same process of association led to the personification of the sun peering through its prison bars "with broad and burning face." The same idea is still working in the poet's mind in lines 185 f, but with a transferred reference to the vessel's hollow ribs instead of the low horizon clouds.

185 f. The changes from the original text of 1798 at this point are very radical.

In comparing the two full versions the toning down of the gruesome element is particularly to be noticed. The following words of Professor Dowden are apposite to this portion of the poem: "Relying largely, as he did in his poems which deal with the supernatural, on the effect produced by their psychological truth, Coleridge could afford to subdue the supernatural, and refine it to the utmost. . . . More important than truth physical he felt truth psychological to be. And attaining this, he did not need, as 'Monk' Lewis* did, to drag into his verse all the horrors of the churchyard and the nether pit of Hell. . . . Again, in *The Ancient Mariner*, where the spectre bark approaches the doomed ship, and the forms of Death and Life-in-Death are visible, playing at dice for the mariner and his companions, a verse

* A contemporary of Coleridge
 His chief work, *The Monk*, accour

d author of supernatural romances.
 15 . 2.

full of charnel abominations occurs in the original text (two stanzas, in fact), which was afterwards judiciously omitted. Coleridge felt that these hideous incidents of the grave only detracted from the finer horror of the voluptuous beauty of his White Devil, the nightmare Life-in-Death."—Dowden, *New Studies in Literature*, page 338 f.

198. **And whistles thrice.** Whistling at sea is sure to bring on a storm, runs the sailors' superstition.

thrice, in addition to riming with "dice," is used for its superstitious significance. It is the favorite number for invocations.

"Thrice to the holly brake—

Thrice to the well—

I bid thee awake,

White Maid of Avenel!"

Scott, *The Monastery*.

201 f. The gruesomeness of the situation here reaches a climax.

210-211. **The horned Moon.** "It is a common superstition among sailors that something evil is about to happen whenever a star dogs the moon" (manuscript note by Coleridge). "But," adds Mr. Campbell, "no sailor ever saw a star within the nether tip of a horned moon." This error was not committed by Coleridge in the 1798 edition, where the reading is "Almost atween the tips."

222-223. **And every soul**, etc. The souls in leaving the bodies make an angry noise in the Mariner's guilty ears. It is superstitiously held that the soul may be seen and heard sometimes while leaving the body. Cf. Tennyson, :

"The gloomy brewer's [Cromwell's] soul

Went by me like a stork."

Tennyson, *The Talking Oak*, 55.

And Rossetti :

"And the souls mounting up to God

Went by her like thin flames."

Rossetti, *The Blessed Damozel*.

The impression of the supernatural conveyed by this and the following parts of the poem is skillfully analyzed by Walter Pater. "Fancies of the strange things which may very well happen, even

in broad daylight, to men shut up alone in ships far off on the sea, seem to have occurred to the human mind in all ages with a peculiar readiness, and often have about them, from the story of the stealing of Dionysius downward, the fascination of a certain dreamy grace, which distinguishes them from other kinds of marvellous inventions. This sort of fascination *The Ancient Mariner* brings to its highest degree: it is the delicacy, the dreamy grace, in his presentation of the marvellous, which makes Coleridge's work so remarkable. The too palpable intruders from a spiritual world in almost all ghost literature, in Scott and Shakespeare even, have a kind of crudity or coarseness. Coleridge's power is in the very fineness with which, as by some really ghostly finger, he brings home to our inmost sense his inventions, daring as they are—the skeleton ship, the polar spirit, the inspiriting of the dead corpses of the ship's crew. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* has the plausibility, the perfect adaptation to reason, and the general aspect of life, which belongs to the marvellous, when actually presented as part of a credible experience in our dreams. Doubtless the mere experience of the opium-eater, the habit he must almost necessarily fall into of noting the more elusive phenomena of dreams, had something to do with that; in its essence, however, it is connected with a more purely intellectual circumstance in the development of Coleridge's poetic gift. . . . The modern mind, so minutely self-scrutinizing, if it is to be affected at all by a sense of the supernatural, needs to be more finely touched than was possible in the older romantic presentment of it. . . . It is this finer, more delicately marvellous supernaturalism, fruit of his more delicate psychology, that Coleridge infuses into romantic adventure, itself also then a new or revived thing in English literature; and with a fineness of weird effect in *The Ancient Mariner*, unknown in those older, more simple, romantic legends and ballads. It is a flower of mediæval or later German romance, growing up in the peculiarly compounded atmosphere of modern psychological speculation, and putting forth in it wholly new qualities. The quaint prose commentary, which runs side by side with the verse of *The Ancient Mariner*, illustrates this—a composition of quite a different shade of beauty and merit from that of the verse which it accompanies, connecting this, the chief poem of Coleridge, with his philosophy, and emphasizing therein that psychological interest of which I have spoken, its curious soul-lore."

PART IV

The gloss forms here the only perfect commentary. The first two stanzas interrupt the narrative for the purpose of preventing monotony, and to reveal the effect of this weird story upon the Wedding-Guest. The next stanza relates the Mariner's utter desolation of spirit, and this and the stanzas which follow are usually considered the crucial part of the poem from the philosophical standpoint. The interpretation lies upon the surface. There is no real mystery about it. With unuttered contempt in his heart for the lowly creatures of the deep, he seeks to pray and can not. He despises them that in their debased form they live on, while on the deck lie dead "the many men so beautiful." Through days and nights he feels their curse on his soul, but "in his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth toward the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward." It is a beautiful reflection of Wordsworth's teaching that Nature can redeem us and restore us to our higher selves. Involuntarily he blesses the swimming creatures which he had before despised. This spontaneous sympathy presents itself in marked contrast with the wanton and equally thoughtless cruelty which prompted him to shoot the unoffending Albatross.

"The selfsame moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea."

Here lies, if anywhere, the allegory.

226-227. **And thou art long**, etc. "For the last two lines of this stanza I am indebted to Mr. Wordsworth" (note of Coleridge). Compare,

"Ribb'd like the sand at mark of sea."

Lord Soulis (Border Minstrelsy).

Note the direct description in this stanza. How does Coleridge generally obtain his effects of human description in the poem?

265-272. After commenting on the exquisite beauty and truth of this passage, the Rev. Stopford Brooke adds: "But Coleridge is uncontent to leave the description of the sky without throwing around it the light of the higher imagination, and it is characteristic of the quaint phantasy which belonged to his nature that

he puts the thoughts which lift the whole scene into the realm of the imagination into the prose gloss at the side—and it is perhaps the loveliest little thought in all his writings."

274. **tracks of shining white.** An allusion to the phosphorescence of the sea occasioned by innumerable animalculæ.

282 f. **O happy living things,** etc. "It is through a sudden welling forth of sympathy with their happiness, and a sudden sense of their beauty, that the spell which binds the afflicted mariner is snapped. That one self-centred in crude egoism should be purified and converted through a new sympathy with suffering and sorrow is a common piece of morality; this purification through sympathy with joy is a piece of finer and higher doctrine."—Dowden, *New Studies in Literature*, page 341. It will be observed that this expiation through spontaneous sympathy consorts with the original offense of wanton cruelty. It has been pointed out that Nature (according to Wordsworth's teaching) had already by her restful beauty prepared the mariner's mind for this access of pure and noble emotion. Its method of manifesting itself by a tender sympathy with animal life is characteristic of romantic poetry. As Brandl (page 97) remarks, "The more the landscape poets of what may be called the century of humanity penetrated into the secrets of earth and air, the more they sympathized with the lower creatures of Nature, and demanded for all and each a fitting lot." What other poet of Coleridge's time and preceding him had shown this new kind of sympathy?

288 f. **I could pray,** etc. The modern humanitarian idea of the efficacy of sympathy is involved in this stanza with the mediæval notion that prayer brought release from the obsession of demons and curses.

PART V

The climax of the story was reached in line 287 of Part VI. What follows in this portion is a result and not a cause. The gruesome element, especially in the stanza, lines 341-344, is wonderfully presented, and the exquisite poetry of lines 367-372 is justly celebrated. The poem now becomes invaded more than ever by mystical allegorical figures.

291. **Oh, sleep!** For other invocations of sleep, compare Shakespeare, *II Henry IV*, III, i; *Macbeth*, II, ii; Sidney, *Son-*

net on Sleep; Daniels's *Sonnet to Sleep* (see Sharp's *Sonnets of this Century*, page lviii); Wordsworth, *Sonnets to Sleep*; etc.

318-326. The Rev. Stopford Brooke, comparing this description of a tropical squall with the peacefulness of lines 367 f, writes as follows: "In both these descriptions, one of the terror, the other of the softness of Nature, a certain charm, of the source of which we are not at once conscious, is given by the introduction into the lonely sea of images borrowed from the land, but which exactly fit the sounds to be described at sea; such as the noise of the brook and the sighing of the sedge. We are brought into closer sympathy with the mariner by this subtle suggestion of his longing for the land and its peace. And we ourselves enjoy the travel of thought, swept to and fro without any shock—on account of the fitness of illustration and thing—from sea to land, from land to sea."

334 f. **The helmsman steered**, etc. See Introduction (pages 61, 64) for the history of this idea of navigating the vessel by the dead seamen.

337. **'gan**. Cf. line 385. The apostrophe is due to the unwarranted supposition that the word is an abbreviated form of "began." It is in direct succession from Middle English, *ginnen*, preterite *gan*, Anglo-Saxon *onginnan*, and is quite common in ballads and old English poetry generally.

345-349. **I fear thee**, etc. This stanza was not in the 1798 edition.

350. **they dropped their arms**. In the text as we now have it "they" refers to spirits, or at least appears to. In the old text the reference was to line 339.

According to tradition, ghosts depart at break of day. Spirits are frequently reported to have disappeared with sounds of music. Contrast this with the angry departure of the seamen's souls in lines 222, 223.

382. **And the ship stood still also**. The ship has now ceased sailing northward impelled by the South Polar spirit who has guided it. Beyond this limit he evidently is powerless to go. The Sun fixes the ship to the Ocean for a minute, when she begins to move

"Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion,"

for we must imagine that the Polar spirit does not care to relax his hold until his vengeance is assured. However, the angelic protecting spirits seem to be victorious :

"Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound."

The gloss in lines 377 f. involves curious contradictions. The marginal commentary to lines 103-106 indicates that the ship had *then* reached the Line on the voyage north. This appears to be contradicted from lines 328, 335, 367 f, 373 f., which imply that the vessel is still sailing northward from the position described in 103 f.

392. **And I fell**, etc. The metre of this line is irregular and scarcely pleasing. The edition of 1798 reads :

"And I fell into a swoond."

399. **By Him who died on cross**. A common ballad oath.
Cf. :

" 'This is a mery mornynge,' seid Litull John,
'Be hym that dyed on tre'" (cross).

Robin Hood and the Monk, lines 13-14.

407. **honey dew**. For this interesting word consult a dictionary. *Cf.* Coleridge in his *Kubla Khan* :

" . . . Close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise."

PART VI

426-429. **Fly, brother, fly ! more high, more high !** These lines are not fully clear. We can form only a doubtful surmise as to why the spirits must fly higher, and why they would otherwise be belated. The assumption is that they are bound for some far-off celestial goal, and if from curiosity they tarried longer in the lower regions of the air they would be retarded beyond the due time. It is perhaps more poetically satisfying to permit the existence of some mysteries that can not be explained in this poem.

446-451. Coleridge in English poetry, and Victor Hugo in French poetry, possessed this faculty of evoking the supernatural

dread of the unknown. It is far other and higher in its essence than the crude methods employed to arouse alarm by the "graveyard poets" and prose writers of the eighteenth century.

464 f. "This unexpected gentle conclusion brings our feet back to the common soil, with a bewildered sweetness of relief and soft quiet after the prodigious strain of mental excitement, which is like nothing else we can remember in poetry. . . . Thus we are set down on the soft grass, in a tender bewilderment, out of the clouds."—Mrs. Oliphant.

"How pleasantly, how reassuringly, the whole nightmare story is made to end among the clear, fresh sounds, and lights of the bay where it began."—Walter Pater, *Appreciations*, p. 101.

467. **countree**. Old French *contrée*, Pop. Lat. *contrata*, from L. *contra*, i. e., lying over against, that which is opposite one. Cf. German *Gegend* from *gegen*.—1798 edition, *countrée*. To our modern ears this sounds like a case of wrenched accent, but there is no doubt that originally the last was the stress-bearing syllable in this word, as in many others where we should not so expect it. Among modern poets Rossetti and Mr. Swinburne obtain many curious and often legitimate metrical effects by this unusual placing of the accent; e.g.:

"Nothing is better, I well think
Than love; the hidden well-water
Is not so delicate to drink;
This was well seen of me and her."

Swinburne, *The Leper*.

Naturally, examples might be multiplied from the old ballads.

PART VII

The task of the poet increases in difficulty with this sudden return to normal conditions. He shows consummate skill in effecting the most difficult transition in the poem from the world of mystery and wonder to the world of human reality. "The ship went down like lead," and the Mariner returns once more to the busy haunts of men. Memories of his strange and awful spiritual experience still stir within him, and at uncertain hours the ancient agony returns, until he finds some chosen mortal whom he must chasten by his tale of sin and suffering, and redeem even in a

thoughtless hour of mirth to a consciousness of the seriousness of life. As the tale draws to a close the joyous uproar bursts from the open door :

"The Wedding-Guests are there :
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are :
And hark the little vesper-bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer !"

This is an evidence that the Ancient Mariner has found redemption at last ; and then follows the poignant stanza in which the whole story is lifted to the spiritual plane, to express, as it has rarely been expressed before, the isolation of a soul in sin :

"O Wedding-Guest ! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea :
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seemed there to be."

We cannot doubt that in these wonderful lines Coleridge has given expression also to his own strivings after spiritual truth.

Though possessed of a fanatic's earnestness, the Mariner still retains his homely sympathies, his simple affections ; and the touch of naturalness in the stanza which follows makes the story of his weird adventures seem more reliable :

"O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company."

The noises of the wedding-feast have broken in harmlessly upon the narrative ; we must be deaf to the world for a season in our moods of spiritual effort and attainment ; but the sweet charities of human intercourse again resume their sway :

"To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths, and maidens gay."

Despite all the fantastic incident and romantic glamor of his work, we must conclude with Dante Rossetti that "the leading point about Coleridge's work is its human love."

So much for the element of humanity in the poem. The lesson of love and charity to man and beast is even more strongly enforced in the next two stanzas, with too much insistence even, if we trust Coleridge's own statement. "Mrs. Barbauld once told me that she admired *The Ancient Mariner* very much, but that there were two faults in it—it was improbable, and had no moral. As for the probability, I owned that that might admit some question; but as to the want of a moral, I told her that, in my own judgment, the poem had too much; and that the only, or chief fault, if I might say so, was *the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader* as a principle or cause of action in a work of such pure imagination. It ought to have had no more moral than the *Arabian Nights'* tale of the merchant's sitting down to eat dates by the side of a well, and throwing the shells aside, and, lo! a genie starts up, and says he must kill the afore-said merchant, because one of the date shells had, it seems, put out the eye of the genie's son."—*Table Talk*, May 31, 1830.

The italics are not Coleridge's, but serve to emphasize the fact that we must seek for no deeply-hidden moral teaching; the moral is, in fact, so obvious, as Coleridge averred, that he who runs may read. Although we can reconcile many of the events of the narrative with spiritual truths, it is dangerous and not conducive to an enjoyment of the poem to carry the attempt too far. Let us preserve something at least of the charming inconsequence of the *Arabian Nights*, such as the condign punishment and the ruthless slaying of the crew because the Mariner had killed a bird! It does not measurably improve the beauty of the poem to hold with the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. xiv, that Coleridge desired to establish in *The Ancient Mariner* a system of Christian philosophy, "to present the fall from the innocence of ignorance, from the immediacy of natural faith, and the return, through the medium of sin and doubt, to conscious virtue and belief. . . . 'The ship was cheered'—man commences the voyage of life. 'And now the storm-blast came'—the world, with its buffets, confronts him."

Coleridge never entertained such a poetical heresy as this. His chief concern was to tell a tale of wonder, to break in upon the commonplaceness of our material routine with a voice from the outer world of mystery and dim suggestiveness. And if at times a shaft of spiritual light strikes through the verse, we realize that elsewhere lies the essence of its charm—in the subtle

cadence of the diction, the musical fall of the words—the imaginative intensity of the thought, and in that quality of strangeness added to beauty” which Walter Pater recognized as the distinguishing mark of the romantic temper. The poem is therefore, we repeat, not primarily didactic or even allegoric in character; and, when distinctly moral issues do seem to be involved in the poem, this occurs in pursuance of the poet’s purpose to transfer “from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.” It is sufficient for us to know that every poem which subserves the supreme laws of beauty must inevitably bear its tribute to that higher moral law which underlies the beautiful; whereas a poem which should strive to preach morality in defiance of the laws of beauty would miss that nobler aim and thereby fail in its result.

517. **marineres.** So spelled throughout the 1798 edition, and preserved here on account of the rime. Discuss the rimes in this stanza.

529. **The planks look warped.** So written in the 1798 edition, and surely correct. 1817 and all later editions read “looked.”

578-590. The motive of these stanzas is evidently derived from the legend of the Wandering Jew. The tradition runs that the latter refused Christ a resting place on his way to the crucifixion, and was therefore doomed to perpetual wandering over the earth, without release by death. He was forced in spite of himself to tell his story, and to preach Christianity even in unwilling ears.

612-617. **He prayeth well,** etc. Reference has already been made to the love of animals as a new source of poetry since the time of Burns and Cowper. “In *The Ancient Mariner* are the two great elements of the folk-tale—love of the marvellous, the supernatural, and love of the lower animals. Wonder is the essence of both and both are of the essence of religion. True to the world’s heart is the recognition of something *real* above and beyond the *actual* in life; equally true is the reverent awe with which primitive men regard the migrations and strange instincts of birds and beasts.”—E. Charlton Black.

Discuss the general question of a moralistic or allegoric intention in the poem.

NOTES

ON THE SELECT POEMS OF WORDSWORTH

THE REVERIE OF POOR SUSAN

COMPOSED 1797 (?); PUBLISHED 1800.

Wordsworth, in his old age, dictated to Miss Isabella Fenwick a series of valuable notes which indicate the circumstances of the composition of his separate poems. In this edition these notes are in part reproduced, and are enclosed within inverted commas.

This poem "arose out of my observations of the affecting music of these birds, hanging in this way in the London streets during the freshness and stillness of the spring morning."

These simple verses, which might almost appear to verge upon the commonplace, are thoroughly characteristic of the early manner of Wordsworth. They derive their peculiar force from the heightening of prosaic detail through the play of the imagination. The extreme simplicity of the diction clearly marks the reaction from the artificiality of eighteenth century poetry in general, and the choice of a humble subject is in thorough harmony with Wordsworth's theories of poetry. The following passage from the preface of the *Lyrical Ballads* has an important bearing upon this and many other poems in the present volume. "The principal object, then, proposed in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as possible, in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain coloring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and, further and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find

a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from these elementary feelings, and, from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and, lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. The language, too, of these men has been adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike and disgust) because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity, they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions. Accordingly, such a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language than that which is frequently substituted for it by poets, who think that they are conferring honor upon themselves and their art, in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression, in order to furnish food for fickle tastes, and fickle appetites, of their own creation."

EXPOSTULATION AND REPLY

COMPOSED 1798: PUBLISHED 1798.

"This poem is a favorite among the Quakers, as I have learned on many occasions. It was composed in front of the house of Alfoxden, in the spring of 1798." The scene is laid around Esthwaite Lake, which is near the village of Hawkshead, where Wordsworth went to school. William Taylor (the "Matthew" of this poem) was his favorite master.

Wordsworth, when he wrote these verses, had but recently emerged from the mental crisis described in the biographical sketch. From having worshipped reason perhaps too exclusively, he passed for a time to the other no less dangerous

extreme, in which, as the poem shows, the mind is purely receptive and passive. The true equipoise between his intellect and his emotions was, however, soon attained, and nature then received from the activities of his own soul as much or more than she conferred upon him:

"An auxiliar light
Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
Bestowed new splendor; the melodious birds,
The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on
Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed
A like dominion, and the midnight storm
Grew darker in the presence of my eye."

The Prelude ii, 368 f.

THE TABLES TURNED

COMPOSED 1798: PUBLISHED 1798.

Professor Dowden has an interesting note on this poem. "The stanza beginning 'One impulse from a vernal wood' has been censured for exaggeration, but Wordsworth means that in communion with external nature a moment may come which will evoke from the heart more moral energy than can be taught by books. The contrast is not merely between books and nature, but also between the genial temper of mind induced by external nature, when rightly observed and felt, and the temper of the mere analytic intellect."

TO MY SISTER

COMPOSED 1798: PUBLISHED 1798.

"Composed in front of Alfoxden House. My little boy-messenger on this occasion was the son of Basil Montagu. The larch mentioned in the first stanza was standing when I revisited the place in May, 1841, more than forty years after." It has now disappeared, but its place can be identified.

The overscrupulous minuteness to which Coleridge took exception in certain of Wordsworth's poems, may be noted in lines 4 and 10. This poem, and two which follow, are important for their asseveration of the superiority of the emotions over the reasoning faculty. (See *Biographical Sketch*, p. 112 f.) There is

a half humoristic exaggeration of this idea contained in ll. 25-26, with which compare *The Tables Turned*, ll. 21-24.

These three poems (*To My Sister*, *Expostulation and Reply*, and *The Tables Turned*) open up the interesting question of Wordsworth's relation to modern science. Mr Leslie Stephen has said in his *History of English Thought* that Wordsworth "hates science, because it regards facts without the imaginative and emotional coloring." It is true that Wordsworth has often spoken petulantly, and even foolishly, of certain aspects of modern science, but it would be unjust to accuse him of hostility to science in general. His indictment may be summed up briefly in his own words:—"Trade, commerce, and manufactures, physical science and mechanic arts, out of which so much wealth has arisen, have made our countrymen infinitely less sensible to movements of imagination and fancy than were our forefathers in their simple state of society." His own words also indicate the possibility of the blending of a perception of beauty with the zeal for scientific research. "Some are of opinion that the habit of analysing, decomposing, and anatomising, is inevitably unfavorable to the perception of beauty. People are led into this mistake by overlooking the fact that such processes being, to a certain extent, within the reach of a limited intellect, we are apt to ascribe to them that insensibility of which they are in truth the effect, and not the cause. Admiration and love, to which all knowledge truly vital must tend, are felt by men of real genius in proportion as their discoveries in natural philosophy are enlarged; and the beauty in form of a plant or an animal is not made less, but more apparent, as a whole, by a more accurate insight into its constituent properties and powers. A *savant*, who is not also a poet in soul and a religionist in heart, is a feeble and unhappy creature."

NUTTING

COMPOSED 1799; PUBLISHED 1800.

"Written in Germany; intended as a part of a poem on my own life, but struck out as not being wanted there. Like most of my schoolfellows, I was an impassioned Nutter. For this pleasure, the Vale of Esthwaite, abounding in coppice wood, furnished a very wide range. These verses arose out of the remembrance of feelings I had often had when a boy, and

particularly in the extensive woods that still stretch from the side of Esthwaite Lake towards Graythwaite."

Wordsworth possessed in an unusual degree the power of reviving the impressions of his youth. Few autobiographical records are so vivid in this respect as his *Prelude*. In his famous ode on the *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, he dwells upon the unreflective exultation which in the child responds to the joyousness of nature, and with a profound intuition that may not be justified in the facts, he sees in this heedless delight a mystical intimation of immortality.

In the poem *Nutting* the animal exhilaration of boyhood is finely blended with this deeper feeling of mystery. The boy exultingly penetrates into one of those woodland retreats where nature seems to be holding communion with herself. For some moments he is subdued by the beauty of the place, and lying among the flowers he hears with ecstasy the murmur of the stream. Then the spirit of ravage peculiar to boyhood comes over him, and he rudely mars the beauty of the spot :

"And the shady nook
Of hazels, and the green and mossy bower,
Deformed and sul'ied, patiently gave up
Their quiet being :"

Such wantonness seems to his maturer reflection a sacrilege, and even the boy was not insensible to the silent reproach of the "intruding sky."

Touch,—for there is a spirit in the woods. Many lines might be quoted from Wordsworth to illustrate his theory of the personal attributes of nature. In some of his more elevated passages nature in all her processes is regarded as the intimate revelation of the Godhead, the radiant garment in which the Deity clothes Himself that our senses may apprehend Him. Thus, when we touch a tree or a flower we may be said to touch God himself. In this way the beauty and power of nature become sacred for Wordsworth, and inspired his verse at times with a solemn dignity to which other poets have rarely attained.

The immanence of God in nature, and yet His superiority to His own revelation of Himself is beautifully expressed in some of the later verses of *Hart Leap Well*:

"The Being, that is in the clouds and air,
That is in the green leaves among the groves,

Maintains a deep and reverential care
For the unoffending creatures whom he loves."

Yet the life in nature is capable of multiplying itself infinitely, and each of her manifold divisions possesses a distinctive mood; one might almost say a separate life of its own. It is in its ability to capture the true emotional mood which clings to some beautiful object or scene in nature, and which that object or scene may truly be said to inspire, that Wordsworth's power lies.

Wordsworth possessed every attribute necessary to the descriptive poet,—subtle powers of observation, ears delicately tuned to seize the very shadow of sound, and a diction of copious strength suggestive beyond the limits of ordinary expression. Yet purely descriptive poetry he scorned. "He expatiated much to me one day," writes Mr. Aubrey de Vere, "as we walked among the hills above Grasmere, on the mode in which Nature had been described by one of the most justly popular of England's modern poets—one for whom he preserved a high and affectionate respect [evidently Sir Walter Scott]. 'He took pains,' Wordsworth said; 'he went out with his pencil and note-book, and jotted down whatever struck him most—a river rippling over the sands, a ruined tower on a rock above it, a promontory, and a mountain-ash waving its red berries. He went home and wove the whole together into a poetical description.' After a pause, Wordsworth resumed, with a flashing eye and impassioned voice: 'But Nature does not permit an inventory to be made of her charms! He should have left his pencil and note-book at home, fixed his eye as he walked with a reverent attention on all that surrounded him, and taken all into a heart that could understand and enjoy. Then, after several days had passed by, he should have interrogated his memory as to the scene. He would have discovered that while much of what he had admired was preserved to him, much was also most wisely obliterated; that which remained—the picture surviving in his mind—would have presented the ideal and essential truth of the scene, and done so in a large part by discarding much which, though in itself striking, was not characteristic. In every scene many of the most brilliant details are but accidental; a true eye for Nature does not note them, or at least does not dwell on them.'"

The student should learn to compare the descriptive methods of Coleridge and Wordsworth. See especially Lowell's note quoted on pp. 197-198; also see pp. 47 f.

INFLUENCE OF NATURAL OBJECTS

This poem was composed at Goslar in 1799 as part of the first book of *The Prelude* (published in 1850). It was first printed in Coleridge's periodical *The Friend*, in December, 1809, with the instructive though pedantic title, "Growth of Genius from the Influences of Natural Objects on the Imagination, in Boyhood and Early Youth." It appeared in Wordsworth's poems of 1815 with the following title:—"Influence of Natural Objects in calling forth and strengthening the Imagination in Boyhood and Early Youth."

The opening verses of this poem are still another instance of the identification of God with nature. As Mr. Stopford Brooke writes, "we are here in contact with a Person, not with a thought. But who is this person? Is she only the creation of imagination, having no substantive reality beyond the mind of Wordsworth? No, she is the poetic impersonation of an actual Being, the form which the poet gives to the living Spirit of God in the outward world, in order that he may possess a metaphysical thought as a subject for his work as an artist."

The *Lines Composed above Tintern Abbey* contain the highest expression which Wordsworth has given to this thought. To the heedless animal delight in nature had succeeded a season in his youth when the beauty and power of nature "haunted him like a passion," though he knew not why. The "dizzy rapture" of those moods he can no longer feel. Yet,

"Not for this

Faint I nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed, for such loss, I would believe
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. *And I have felt*
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts: a sense sublime

*Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man :
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."*

In ll. 42-46, of *The Influence of Natural Objects*, we have an inimitable Wordsworthian effect. Into the midst of his wild sport the voice of Nature steals, and subdues his mind to receive the impulses of peace and beauty from without. We involuntarily think of the boy he has celebrated, his playmate upon Windermere, who loved to rouse the owls with mimic hootings, but

"When a lengthened pause
Of silence came and baffled his best skill,
Then sometimes, in that silence while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents ; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind,
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
Into the bosom of the steady lake."

The Prelude, v. 379 f.

THREE YEARS SHE GREW IN SUN AND SHOWER

COMPOSED IN THE HARTZ FOREST IN 1799: PUBLISHED IN 1800.

From what we know of Wordsworth's interpretation of nature this poem will not be considered a mere exercise of playful fancy. It was the ingenious theory of Rousseau that children should be educated in communion with nature, and apart from contact with the world. This poem is, therefore, in part a reflection of that idea; but we must not take it as representing Wordsworth's views upon education in their entirety. Yet, there is undeniable beauty, and some truth perhaps, in the thought that the child's character, and even her appearance, may be moulded by the subtle influences of nature.

It will be noticed that not only is the child removed from the disturbing turmoil of the world, but she is also purely recep-

tive of these beautiful influences. The mood of the poem is therefore to be compared with that expressed in *Expostulation and Reply*, *The Tables Turned*, and *To My Sister*. In the first verse nature withdraws the child, Lucy, to herself. In the second verse she will exercise upon her both a kindling and restraining power. She shall have (verse 3) at once the sportiveness of the fawn, and the quiet reserve of "mute insensate things." The two succeeding verses show how nature will mould her form and add beauty to her face.

The fifth verse affords another fine example of Wordsworth's sensitiveness to the beauty of sound. This was instanced in the preceding poem, but here the power of sound is still more subtle, for the face of the child grows more beautiful for the murmuring of the dancing rivelets.

In the final verse the poet speaks in his own words. Must we conclude that the child has breathed too rare an atmosphere of perfection, and that life in this world is not consistent with absolute purity?

The Lucy Poems. The Lucy Poems, which were composed at Goslar, form a group of five, namely: "Strange fits of passion have I known"; "She dwelt among the untrodden ways"; "I travelled among unknown men"; "Three years she grew in sun and shower"; and "A slumber did my spirit seal."

"The Goslar poems include those addressed to Lucy. Some have supposed that there was an actual Lucy, known to Wordsworth in Yorkshire, 'about the springs of Dove,' to whom he was attached, who died early, and whose love and beauty he commemorates in these five memorial poems. There is no doubt that the intensity of the lines, the allusion to the spinning-wheel . . . to the heath, the calm, and quiet scene, all suggest a real person. We only wish there were evidence that it had been so. But there is no such evidence." Knight's *Wordsworth*, ix, p. 187.

MICHAEL

A PASTORAL POEM

Composed in 1800, and published in the second volume of the *Lyrical Ballads* in the same year. "Written at the Town-end, Grasmere, about the same time as *The Brothers*. The Sheepfold, on which so much of the poem turns, remains, or rather the

ruins of it. The character and circumstances of Luke were taken from a family to whom had belonged, many years before, the house we lived in at Town-end, along with some fields and woodlands on the eastern shore of Grasmere. The name of the Evening Star was not in fact given to this house, but to another on the same side of the valley, more to the north."

As a supplement to the note on p. 153 the following may be added from a letter of Wordsworth to Charles James Fox: "In the two poems, *The Brothers* and *Michael*, I have attempted to draw a picture of the domestic affections, as I know they exist among a class of men who are now almost confined to the north of England. They are small independent *proprietors* of land, here called 'statesmen' [i.e., estates-men], men of respectable education, who daily labor on their little properties. . . . Their little tract of land serves as a kind of rallying point for their domestic feelings, as a tablet upon which they are written, which makes them objects of memory in a thousand instances, when they would otherwise be forgotten. The two poems that I have mentioned were written to show that men who do not wear fine clothes can feel deeply."

The poem *Michael* is probably the best adapted of the present series to show Wordsworth's powers of realism. He describes the poem as "a pastoral," which at once induces a comparison, greatly to Wordsworth's advantage, with the pseudo-pastorals of the age of Pope. There the shepherds and shepherdesses were scarcely the pale shadows of reality, while Wordsworth's poem never swerves from the line of truth. "The poet," as Sir Henry Taylor says with reference to *Michael*, "writes in his confidence to impart interest to the realities of life, deriving both the confidence and the power from the deep interest which he feels in them. It is an attribute of unusual susceptibility of imagination to need no extraordinary provocatives; and when this is combined with intensity of observation and peculiarity of language, it is the high privilege of the poet so endowed to rest upon the common realities of life and to dispense with its anomalies." The student should therefore be careful to observe (1) the truth of description, and the appropriateness of the description to the characters; (2) the strong and accurate delineation of the characters themselves. Not only is this to be noted in the passages where the poet has taken pains openly to portray their various characteristics, but

there are many passages, or single lines perhaps, which serve more subtly to delineate them. What proud reserve, what sorrow painfully restrained, the following line, for example, contains: "Two evenings after he had heard the news."

As this is the only poem of the series in which human character is presented in some diversity, the student should pay close attention to this feature.

TO THE DAISY

COMPOSED 1802: PUBLISHED 1807

"This and the other poems addressed to the same flower were composed at Town-end, Grasmere, during the earlier part of my residence there." The three poems on the Daisy were the outpourings of one mood, and were prompted by the same spirit which moved him to write his poems of humble life. The sheltered garden flowers have less attraction for him than the common blossoms by the wayside. In their unobtrusive humility these "unassuming Common-places of Nature" might be regarded, as the poet says, "as administering both to moral and spiritual purposes." The "Lesser Celandine," buffeted by the storm, affords him, on another occasion, a symbol of meek endurance.

Shelley and Keats have many beautiful references to flowers in their poetry. Keats has merely a sensuous delight in their beauty, while Shelley both revels in their hues and fragrance, and sees in them a symbol of transitory loveliness. His *Sensitive Plant* shows his exquisite sympathy for flower life.

TO THE CUCKOO

COMPOSED IN THE ORCHARD AT TOWN-END 1802: PUBLISHED 1807

Wordsworth, in his Preface to the 1815 edition, has the following note on ll. 3, 4 of the poem:—"This concise interrogation characterises the seeming ubiquity of the cuckoo, and dispossesses the creature almost of corporeal existence; the Imagination being tempted to this exertion of her power, by a consciousness in the memory that the cuckoo is almost perpetually heard throughout the season of spring, but seldom becomes an object of sight." The cuckoo is the bird we associate with the name of

Wordsworth, as with Keats the nightingale, and with Shelley the skylark. While we admire the delicate precision with which the poet characterises the bird, the chief value of the poem lies in its imaginative suggestiveness. The bird is merely "babbling to the vale of sunshine and of flowers," and yet its wandering voice brings back to him the thought of his vanished childhood. We have already noticed the almost sacred value which Wordsworth attaches to the impressions of his youth, and even to the memory of these impressions which remains with him to console his maturer life. The bird is a link which binds him to his childhood:

"And I can listen to thee yet;
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again."

In other poems, especially in the *Intimations of Immortality*, he speaks of "the glory and the freshness of a dream," which hallowed nature for him as a child, and which grew fainter as the "shades of the prison-house began to close upon the growing Boy," until

"At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day."

THE GREEN LINNET

COMPOSED 1803: PUBLISHED 1807

"Composed in the orchard, Town End, Grasmere, where the bird was often seen as here described."

In this poem Wordsworth dwells upon the joyousness of nature as revealed in the revels of the linnet. The following note by Mr. Wintringham, in *The Birds of Wordsworth*, is appropriate to the last verse. "Of all English birds, the greenfinch—or the green grosbeak—is best adapted to its position in nature. Its color makes it almost imperceptible to all who are not adepts in ornithology."

SHE WAS A PHANTOM OF DELIGHT

COMPOSED 1804: PUBLISHED 1807

"Written at Town End, Grasmere. The germ of this poem was four lines composed as a part of the verses on the *Highland*

Girl. Though beginning in this way, it was written from my heart, as is sufficiently obvious."

It is not clear which four lines of the *Highland Girl* are referred to by Wordsworth.

The poems have a certain general resemblance inasmuch as in both the poet regards the woman at first as a phantom apparition, and then upon a nearer view he sees her human qualities. Compare ll. 11-18 of *The Highland Girl* :

"In truth together do ye seem
Like something fashioned in a dream;
Such Forms as from their covert peep
When earthly cares are laid asleep I
But, O fair Creature! in the light
Of common day, so heavenly bright,
I bless thee, Vision as thou art,
I bless thee with a human heart."

In the present poem there is a progression of the thought from stanza to stanza. In the first stanza the apparition almost transcends our mortal senses; in the second she takes on a woman's form, and seems a fitting comrade of man's every day life—

"A Creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food."

In the third stanza, as his wife, her loftier qualities are described, and she becomes his intellectual and moral companion. In both the second and third stanzas the poet dwells upon the blending in her nature of spiritual and human attributes:

"A Spirit, yet a Woman too! l. 12.
A perfect Woman . . .
And yet a Spirit still." ll. 27-29.

The reference to h's wife in *The Prelude*, xiv. 268, is similar in character :

"She came, no more a phantom to adorn
A moment, but an inmate of the heart,
And yet a Spirit, there for me enshrined
To penetrate the lofty and the low;"

17-21. As apposite to ll. 17-21, we may note other verses addressed by Wordsworth to his wife, in which he rejoices in her human imperfections :

"Let other bards of angels sing,
Bright suns without a spot;
But thou art no such perfect thing:
Rejoice that thou art not!"—

and the following verses from *Her only Pilot* :

"While here sits one whose brightness owes its hues
To flesh and blood; no goddess from above,
No fleeting spirit, but my own true love."

Crabb Robinson states in his *Diary* (May 12, 1842), that "Wordsworth said that the poems 'Our Walk was far among the Ancient Trees,' then 'She was a Phantom of Delight,' and finally the two sonnets *To a Painter*, should be read in succession as exhibiting the different phases of his affection to his wife."

22. **The very pulse**, etc. Professor Dowden's comment is as follows: "Does Wordsworth mean by machine merely the body, as Hamlet does in his signature of the letter to Ophelia: 'Thine . . . whilst this machine is to him'? I rather think the whole woman with all her household routine is conceived as the organism of which the thoughtful soul is the animating principle." The word has deteriorated for poetic uses since Wordsworth employed it.

THE SOLITARY REAPER

COMPOSED BETWEEN 1803 AND 1805 : PUBLISHED 1807.

This poem was afterwards included in a series entitled *Memorials of a Tour in Scotland*, (1827). The tour in question was made by Wordsworth in company with his sister and Coleridge in the autumn of 1803. Dorothy Wordsworth throws a light on the genesis of the poem in her *Recollections* of the tour under date of September 13, 1803: "As we descended, the scene became more fertile, our way being pleasantly varied—through coppicés or open fields, and passing farm-houses, though always with an intermixture of cultivated ground. It was harvest-time, and the fields were quietly—might I be allowed to say pensively?—enlivened by small companies of reapers. It is not uncommon in the more lonely parts of the Highlands to see a single person so employed. The following poem was suggested to William by a beautiful sentence in Thomas Wilkinson's *Tour Through Scotland*."

Wordsworth has a note to the editions of 1807 to 1820 as follows: "This Poem was suggested by a beautiful sentence in a MS. 'Tour in Scotland,' written by a friend, the first line being taken from it *verbatim*." The following is the sentence in question: "Passed a female who was reaping alone; she sung in Erse, as she bended over her sickle; the sweetest human voice I ever heard: her strains were *tenderly melancholy*, and felt delicious, *long after they were heard no more*."

In the last stanza of the poem we see again how tenaciously Wordsworth hoards his sensations.

ODE TO DUTY

COMPOSED 1805; PUBLISHED 1807.

"This Ode is on the model of Gray's *Ode to Adversity*, which is copied from Horace's *Ode to Fortune*. Many and many a time have I been twitted by my wife and sister for having forgotten this dedication of myself to the stern law-giver. Transgressor indeed I have been from hour to hour, from day to day: I would fain hope, however, not more flagrantly, or in a worse way than most of my tuneful brethren. But these last words are in a wrong strain. We should be rigorous to ourselves, and forbearing, if not indulgent, to others; and, if we make comparison at all, it ought to be with those who have morally excelled us."

The temper of Gray's poem and Wordsworth's are somewhat similar, and the metre is identical. Adversity and Duty have in common the same chastening and strengthening power. The solemn character of Gray's poem, marred as it is by undue personification, is very impressive. The last stanza might almost have formed part of the *Ode to Duty*:—

"Thy form benign, O goddess, wear,
Thy milder influence impart,
Thy philosophic train be there
To soften, not to wound, my heart.
The generous spark extinct revive,
Teach me to love and to forgive,
Exact my own defects to scan,
What others are to feel, and know myself a Man."

Wordsworth's ode deservedly ranks among the most famous in the language, and many critics are inclined to give it preference over the more elaborate ode *On the Intimations of Immortality*. The meaning of the poem may be interpreted stanza by stanza as follows :

St. 1. The invocation sets forth the guiding and restraining power of Duty, and her strength to heal us in distress. Compare the similar powers ascribed to nature in the poem *Three Years She Grew*; and also compare with Wordsworth's invocation to Duty as the "Stern Daughter of the Voice of God," Gray's *Invocation to Adversity* as the

"Daughter of Jove, relentless power,
Thou tamer of the human breast,
. . . .
Stern, rugged nurse!"

They are both emanations of the Divine will.

St. 2. Some happy blameless souls are instinctively wedded to right, and do their duty though they know it not. If these should fail through over-confidence in their own strength, ("through confidence misplaced") then may the power of duty descend upon them to shield them from harm.

St. 3. The thought in the preceding stanza is almost repeated. Our life will be serenely happy when our inclinations lead us towards virtue.—

"When love is an unerring light,
And joy its own security."

Instinctive virtue may secure in its happiness if in the hour of trial it listens to the Duty.

St. 4. The poet has been allowed to act upon his own impulse, and has hitherto been hurried by misfortune; yet, although he has never been unduly swayed by passion, he feels that he has reposed too much blind confidence in himself, and when Duty has called, he has preferred to follow pleasure. Now he craves for the stricter guidance of Duty (or Conscience).

St. 5. He yearns for this control, not because his soul has been disturbed, or that he feels the remorse of a guilty conscience. But in his calm hours, and in "the quietness of thought," he seeks this guidance. He has long enough enjoyed his unlimited freedom, and feels the oppression of wayward desires. He

wishes to rest his hopes upon something that shall endure, and longs for a lasting repose.

St. 6. Though Duty may appear severe, she still is gracious. The beauty of the world obeys her law, and the divine harmony of the universe flows from her command.

St. 7. Relying upon the graciousness of this "Awful Power," the poet summons it to humbler functions, namely, to fill him with the spirit of self-sacrifice and humility.

ELEGIAC STANZAS

COMPOSED 1805: PUBLISHED 1807.

Further references to John Wordsworth will be found in the following poems:—*To the Daisy* ("Sweet Flower"), *Elegiac Verses in Memory of My Brother*, *When to the Attractions of the Busy World*, *The Brothers*, and *The Happy Warrior*.

With lines 33-40, and 57-60, compare the *Intimations of Immortality*, ll. 176-187:—

"What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind."

SEPTEMBER, 1819

COMPOSED 1819: PUBLISHED 1820.

"This poem and the following were composed in front of Rydal Mount, and during my walks in the neighborhood. Ninetenths of my verses have been murmured out in the open air; and here let me repeat what I believe has already appeared in print. One day a stranger having walked round the garden and grounds

of Rydal Mount, asked one of the female servants, who happened to be at the door, permission to see her master's study. 'This,' said she, leading him forward, 'is my master's library where he keeps his books, but his study is out of doors.'"

UPON THE SAME OCCASION

COMPOSED 1819: PUBLISHED 1820.

Shelley has also finely expressed the charm peculiar to Autumn days:—

"The day becomes more solemn and serene
When noon is past: there is a harmony
In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
Which through the summer is not heard or seen,
As if it could not be, as if it had not been."

Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, st. vii.

The poet feels that as the birds sing in the declining autumn days, so he, although "in the sere and yellow leaf," can still find fitting themes for his verse. Modern poets have been untrue to their lofty calling, and have sung in an enervating strain. He feels that the springtime passion of his youth is past, but still wide is the choice that remains. He will draw inspiration from the bards of old, from Alcæus, the foe of tyrants, and Sappho, the poetess of Love. (This would seem to be inconsistent with stanzas 3 and 4, but the poet seems to justify true passion, and to hold that what is genuinely uttered has no power to "enervate and defile.") The rest of the poem is a fine play of poetic fancy.

TO THE REV. DR. WORDSWORTH

This poem was written and published in 1820.

TO A SKYLARK

COMPOSED 1825: PUBLISHED 1827.

"Written at Rydal Mount, where there are no skylarks, but the poet is everywhere." The poem consisted originally of three

stanzas, the second of which was transferred in 1845 to the poem *A Morning Exercise*. It is as follows :—

“To the last point of vision, and beyond,
Mount, daring Warbler ! that love-prompted strain,
(’Twixt thee and thine a never-failing bond)
Thrills not the less the bosom of the plain :
Yet might’st thou seem, proud privilege ! to sing
All independent of the leafy spring.”

In his note to *A Morning Exercise* Wordsworth says :—“I could wish the last five stanzas of this to be read with the poem addressed to the Skylark.”

One verse of *A Morning Exercise* particularly enforces the thought contained in the earlier poem :—

“Faithful, though swift as lightning, the meek dove ;
Yet more hath Nature reconciled in thee ;
So constant with thy downward eye of love,
Yet, in ærial singleness, so free ;
So humble, yet so ready to rejoice
In power of wing and never wearied voice.”

In Shelley’s lyric, in which we almost hear the quivering beat of the skylark’s wings, we do not realize that the bird is bound to the earth by any tie. It is an unbodied joy among the clouds,—the symbol of a gladness without stain. Wordsworth’s poem has nothing of this pulsating fervor ; but we feel some kinship with this bird whose nest is “upon the dewy ground,” while Shelley’s skylark typifies an ecstasy that can never be attained,—a yearning that can never be satisfied.

A BRIEF HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE SONNET*

The sonnet form was introduced into English poetry by Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey. Their experiments in the

* Reference may be made to “The Sonnet: Its Origin, Structure and Place in Poetry,” by Charles Tomlinson, London, 1874. “Sonnets of this Century,” edited by William Sharp, London (Walter Scott) 1886. “A Treasury of English Sonnets,” edited by David M. Main. “Sonnets of Three Centuries,” edited by Hall Caine, London, 1882. “Milton’s Sonnets,” by Mark Pattison (D. Appleton & Co.), “Neu-englische Metrik,” by Schipper. Also articles in the “Encyclopædia Britannica,” “Quarterly Review,” 1886; “Westminster Review,” 1871; “Dublin Review,” 1876, 1877.

sonnet were published in *Tottel's Miscellany* in 1557, and were prompted by an admiration of Petrarch and other Italian models. Italy was almost certainly the original home of the sonnet (sonnet = Ital. *sonetto*, a little sound, or short strain, from *suono*, sound), and there it has been assiduously cultivated since the thirteenth century. In the fourteenth century Dante and Petrarch gave the form a European celebrity.

Before saying anything of its development in English poetry, it is advisable to examine an admittedly perfect sonnet, so that we may gain an idea of the nature of this type of poem, both as to form and substance. Wordsworth's sonnet upon Milton (*London*, 1802) will serve our purpose (see page 187). By reference to it you will observe :—

The Structure of the Sonnet.

(1) That the sonnet is written in iambic pentameter, and consists of fourteen lines—that number by repeated experimentation having been found the most appropriate for the expression of a single emotional mood.

(2) As an examination of the rimes will show (a b b a a b b a : c d d e e e), there is a natural metrical division at the end of the eighth line. The first eight lines in technical language are called the "octave," the last six lines are called the "sestet." The octave is sometimes said to consist of two quatrains, and the sestet of two tercets.

(3) There is not only a metrical division between the octave and the sestet, but the character of the thought also undergoes a subtle change at that point. It is to be understood, of course, that in the whole poem there must be both unity of thought and mood. Yet, at the ninth line, the thought which is introduced in the octave is elaborated, and presented as it were under another aspect. As Mr. Mark Pattison has admirably expressed it : "This thought or mood should be led up to, and opened in the early lines of the sonnet ; strictly, in the first quatrain ; in the second quatrain the hearer should be placed in full possession of it. After the second quatrain there should be a pause—not full, nor producing the effect of a break—as of one who had finished what he had got to say, and not preparing a transition to a new subject, but as of one who is turning over what has been said in the mind to enforce it further. The opening of the second sys-

As to Substance.

tem, strictly the first tercet, should turn back upon the thought or sentiment, take it up and carry it forward to the conclusion. The conclusion should be a resultant summing the total of the suggestion in the preceding lines. . . . While the conclusion should leave a sense of finish and completeness, it is necessary to avoid anything like epigrammatic point."

(4) An examination of the rimes again will show that greater strictness prevails in the octave than in the sestet. The most regular type of the octave may be represented by a b b a a b b a,

**Riming
System.**

turning therefore upon two rimes only. The sestet, though it contains but six lines, is more liberal in the disposition of its rimes. In the sonnet which we are examining, the rime system of the sestet in c d d e c e—containing, as we see, three separate rimes. In the sestet this is permissible, provided that there is not a riming couplet at the close.

(5) Again, with reference to the rime, it will be observed that the vowel terminals of the octave and the sestet are differentiated. Anything approaching assonance between the two divisions is to be counted as a defect.

(6) It is evident that there is unity both of thought and mood in this sonnet, the sestet being differentiated from the octave only as above described.

(7) It is almost unnecessary to add that there is no slovenly diction, that the language is dignified in proportion to the theme, and that there is no obscurity or repetition in thought or phraseology.

These rules will appear to the young reader of poetry as almost unnecessarily severe. But it must be remembered that the sonnet is avowedly a conventional form (though in it much of the finest poetry in our language is contained), and as such the conventional laws attaching to all prescribed forms must be observed to win complete success.

Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton have lent the authority of their great names to certain distinct variations from the rigid Petrarchan type. The peculiarity of Spenser's sonnets is that the rime of the octave overflows into the sestet, thus marring the exquisite balance which should subsist between the two parts, and yielding an effect of cloying sweetness. Although the famous stanza-form which he invented in his "Faerie Queene"

has found many imitators, his sonnet innovations are practically unimportant.

The Shakespearean sonnet, on the contrary, must be regarded as a well-established variant from the stricter Italian form. Though Shakespeare's name has made it famous, it did not originate with him. Surrey and Daniel had habitually employed it, and in fact it had come to be recognized as the accepted English form. Its characteristic feature, as the following sonnet from Shakespeare will show, was a division into three distinct quatrains, each with alternating rimes, and closed by a couplet. The transition of thought at the ninth line is usually observed :—

“When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possess'd,
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least ;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee—and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate ;
For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings,
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.”

It is Milton's merit that he rescued the sonnet from the snare of verbal wit in which the Elizabethans had involved it, and made it respond to other passions than that of love. His sonnets, as imitations of the Italian form, are more successful than the scattered efforts in that direction of Wyatt and Surrey. They are indeed regular in all respects, save that he is not always careful to observe the pause in the thought, and the subtle change which should divide the octave from the sestet.

After Milton there is a pause in sonnet-writing for a hundred years. William Lisle Bowles (1762-1850), memorable for his influence upon Coleridge, was among the first again to cultivate the form. Coleridge and Shelley gave the sonnet scant attention, and were careless as to its structural qualities. Keats, apart from Wordsworth, was the only poet of the early years of the century who realized its capabilities. He has written a few of

our memorable sonnets, but he was not entirely satisfied with the accepted form, and experimented upon variations that cannot be regarded as successful.

There is no doubt that the stimulus to sonnet-writing in the nineteenth century came from Wordsworth, and he, as we have seen (*Biographical Sketch*, p. 118), received his inspiration from Milton. Wordsworth's sonnets, less remarkable certainly than a supreme few of Shakespeare's, have still imposed themselves as models upon all later writers, while the Shakespearean form has fallen into disuse. A word here, therefore, as to their form.

The strict rime movement of the octave a b b a a b b a is observed in seven only of the present collection of twelve, namely, in the first sonnet, the second, the third, the fifth, the sixth, the seventh, and the eighth. The rime formula of the octave with which Wordsworth's name is chiefly associated is a b b a a c c a. The sonnets in which this additional rime is introduced are the fourth, the ninth, the tenth, the eleventh and the twelfth.

As regards the transition from octave to sestet the following sonnets observe the prescribed law, namely, the second, third, sixth, seventh, and ninth. The seven remaining sonnets all show some irregularity in this respect. The first sonnet (*Fair Star*) with its abrupt *enjambement* at the close of the octave, and the thought-pause in the body of the first line of the sestet, is a form much employed by Mrs. Browning, but rigorously avoided by Dante Gabriel Rossetti with his more scrupulous ideal of sonnet construction. This imperfect transition is seen again in the fourth, fifth, eighth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth sonnets. Its boldness certainly amounts to a technical fault in the two sonnets on *King's College Chapel*.

In the sestet we naturally expect and find much variety in the disposition of the rimes. The conclusion of the last sonnet by a couplet is most unusual in Wordsworth.

FAIR STAR OF EVENING

COMPOSED BY THE SEA-SIDE, NEAR CALAIS, AUGUST, 1802 :

PUBLISHED, 1807

The following extract from Dorothy Wordsworth's journal is appropriate to this poem :—"We arrived at Calais at four o'clock on Sunday morning, the 31st of July. We had delightful walks

after the heat of the day was passed—seeing far off in the west the coast of England, like a cloud, crested with Dover Castle, the evening Star, and the glory of the sky; the reflections in the water were more beautiful than the sky itself; purple waves brighter than precious stones, for ever melting away upon the sands."

COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE

COMPOSED JULY 31, 1802: PUBLISHED, 1807

"Written on the roof of a coach, on my way to France." Miss Wordsworth's journal has the following:—"Left London between five and six o'clock of the morning outside the Dover coach. A beautiful morning. The city, St. Paul's, with the river—a multitude of little boats, made a beautiful sight as we crossed *Westminster Bridge*; the houses not overhung by their clouds of smoke, and were hung out endlessly; yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a pure light, that there was something like the purity of one of Nature's own grand spectacles."

WHEN I HAVE BORNE IN MEMORY

COMPOSED 1802: PUBLISHED 1807, (AND IN THE "MORNING POST" IN 1803)

ll. 2-4. Compare Goldsmith—

"contentment fails,
And honor sinks where commerce long prevails."

Traveller, 91-92.

There would seem to be a contradiction in the sense as between line 8 (*unfilial* fears) and line 14, in which the poet says that his fears arose from his filial affection. Professor Dowden suggests—"Wordsworth doubtless means that the fears, filial as offspring of love, are unfilial as lacking faith."

At this period England's commercial prosperity was advancing by leaps and bounds. Compare "Written in London, September, 1802."

IT IS NOT TO BE THOUGHT OF

COMPOSED SEPTEMBER, 1802: PUBLISHED 1807, (AND IN THE "MORNING POST" IN 1803)

WRITTEN IN LONDON, SEPTEMBER, 1802:

PUBLISHED 1807

"This was written immediately after my return from France to London, when I could not but be struck, as he is described, with the vanity and parade of our own country, especially in great towns and cities, as contrasted with the quiet, I may say the desolation, that the Revolution had produced in France. This must be borne in mind, or else the Reader may think that in this and the succeeding Sonnets I have exaggerated the mischief engendered and fostered among us by undisturbed wealth."

TO SLEEP

COMPOSED 1806: PUBLISHED 1807

This is the best of three sonnets published on this subject, all composed at about this time. Sidney and Daniel have both written well-known Sonnets to Sleep. Compare also *Macbeth*, act ii, scene ii, l. 39; *King Henry IV*, Part II, act iii, scene i, l. 5; *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act III, scene ii, l. 435.

BROOK! WHOSE SOCIETY

COMPOSED 1806(?): PUBLISHED 1815

ll. 6 f. Compare Wordsworth's account of ancient mythologies in *The Excursion* Bk. IV.

Wordsworth would not humanize nature, but would rather see in her a direct revelation of the "Eternal Soul." The poet regards the objects of inanimate nature so miscalled as instinct with individual life, and almost possessed of conscious personality. The following verses from *The Prelude* are an interesting confession of his faith:—

"To every natural form, rock, fruit, or flower,
Even the loose stones that cover the highway,
I gave a moral life: I saw them feel,
Or linked them to some feeling: the great mass
Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all
That I beheld respired with inward meaning."

Bk. III, 130 f.

THOUGHT OF A BRITON ON THE SUBJUGATION OF
SWITZERLAND

COMPOSED IN 1807 AT COLEORTON. PUBLISHED 1807

INSIDE OF KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL
CONTINUED

These sonnets of King's College Chapel were composed about the close of 1820, and were published with the *Statistical Sonnets* in 1822. They form numbers 43-1 of the series.

"My purpose in writing the sonnets, as far as possible, was to confine my view to the introduction, progress, and operation of the Church in England, from the first preaching of the Gospel to the Reformation. The Sonnets were written to store ecclesiastical history and points of doctrine and doctrine with which they have been recently required to be introduced and discussed."

SCORN NO THE SONNET

COMPOSED 1827 (?): PUBLISHED 1827

"Composed almost extempore in the walk of the western side of Rydal Lake."

Mr. John D. in *English Sonnets: A Selection*, p. 220, sums up Wordsworth's qualities as a sonnet writer as follows:—

Wordsworth's quality of modern poets, is perhaps the greatest of English sonnet writers. Not only has he composed

a greater number of sonnets than any other of our poets, but he has also written more that are of first-rate excellence. The intensity of passion in

Wordsworth's sonnets, and herein he differs from Shakespeare, and from Mrs. Browning, for whose sonnet the reader may feel an enthusiastic admiration that Wordsworth's thoughtful and calm verse rarely excites; neither has he attained the 'dignified simplicity' which marks the sonnets of Milton: but for purity of language, for variety and

Wordsworth's
Qualities
as a Sonnet
Writer

strength of thought, for the *curiosa felicitas* of poetical diction, for the exquisite skill with which he associates the emotions of the mind and the aspects of nature, we know of no sonnet writer who can take precedence of Wordsworth. In his larger poems his language is sometimes slovenly, and occasionally, as Sir Walter Scott said, he chooses to walk on all-fours ; but this is rarely the case in the sonnets, and though he wrote upwards of four hundred, there are few, save those on the *Punishment of Death* and some of those called *Ecclesiastical* (for neither argument or dogma find a fitting place in verse) that we could willingly part with. Wordsworth's belief that the language of the common people may be used as the language of poetry was totally inoperative when he composed a sonnet. He wrote at such times in the best diction he could command, and the language, like the thought, is that of a great master. The sonnets embrace almost every theme, except the one to which this branch of the poetical art has been usually dedicated. Some of the noblest are consecrated to liberty ; some describe with incomparable felicity the personal feelings of the writer ; some might be termed simply descriptive, were it not that even these are raised above the rank of descriptive poetry by the pure and lofty imagination of the poet. The light that never was on sea or land pervades the humblest of these pieces, and throughout them there is inculcated a cheerful, because divine, philosophy."

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